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BOJANA KUNST

ARTIST AT WORK

**PROXIMITY OF ART
AND CAPITALISM**

Artist at Work, Proximity of Art and Capitalism

Bojana Kunst



Winchester, UK
Washington, USA

First published by Zero
Books, 2015

Zero Books is an imprint
of John Hunt Publishing
Ltd., Laurel House, Station
Approach, Alresford,
Hants, SO24 9JH, UK
office1@jhpbooks.net
www.johnhuntpublishing.com
www.zero-books.net

For distributor details and
how to order please visit
the 'Ordering' section on

our website.

Text copyright: Bojana
Kunst 2014

ISBN: 978 1 78535 000 9
Library of Congress
Control Number:
2015932361

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from

the British Library.

Design: Stuart Davies

Printed and bound by CPI
Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon,
CR0 4YY, UK

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production and
worldwide
distribution.

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*“Work is
Disease –
Karl
Marx.”*

Mladen
Stilinović,
1981

Preface

The gestation of this book over the past few years is closely linked to my practical and theoretical work, which has, through lectures, workshops, dramaturgical work, work with producers

and artists, travels, festivals and artistic residencies put me face to face with the recurrent questions of artistic powerlessness in relation to politics and contemporary methods of production. In experiencing this powerlessness, an interesting antagonism

was always at work; personally, it disturbed me greatly and posed a number of questions for me, which in turn generated many reflections in this book. This antagonism can be briefly described as a contradiction between the forceful desire to create political and

critical art, and the meek, almost ‘martyr-like’ recognition of the total appropriation of art by capitalism; any stance, no matter how critical and political, can easily find itself as just another in the offer of what Guillermo Gómez-Peña describes as ‘*mainstream bizarre*’.

Of course, this forceful desire for political art, or the close link between creating art and political emancipation, has a long history in the art of the twentieth century. And yet, never before now has it been so widespread – today, it has actually become

a lifestyle, particularly of those who don't have much to do with art, but crave the artistic style of living for this very reason. Art is thus in an interesting relationship with the functioning of contemporary capitalism which saturates all pores of

social life: the criticism
and the
provocativeness of art
seem to be a part of the
exploitation of human
powers.

A number of the texts
that make up this book
were written in a
persistent search to
understand art's
political ambition and

take it extremely seriously, affirm it through writing and thus also reflect on what is the relation between artistic work and artistic labour. I'm interested in analysing procedures and processes of contemporary art and using them to draw

attention to the ambivalent proximity of art and capitalism, and through this critical proximity reaffirm art. And it is here that my reflections intertwine with what art produces in the proximity of capitalism; these questions must necessarily be tied to

the methods of artistic work and production and in fact disclose what kind of worker an artist is, and what are then the forms of his (workers') revolt.

For this reason, I've divided my reflections in the book into several thematic clusters; they focus on fundamental

human forces and
powers; these are,
today, in the centre of
capitalist production, as
well as in the centre of
artistic interests. My
approach to art is
broad and inter-
disciplinary: I often
find a challenge and
invitation to
contemplation and

argument formulation
in artistic practices, but
am less drawn to the
analysis of individual
works than I am to the
thought that these
works trigger, and their
connection to
philosophical questions
about the
characteristics of
contemporary life. I

focus particularly on those artistic practices of the last decades that can be broadly defined as performance or live arts – they range from performance art, contemporary dance and live events to contemporary theatre. Their research of new methods of work and

performing show a clear political tendency.

In the first chapter titled ‘About the Uneasiness of Active Art’, I thus first write about the problems of political art and methods that tell us how to think the relationship between politics and art today.

In the second chapter, 'Production of Subjectivity', I describe the role of performance and radical practices of art today, particularly in a time when one of the basic characteristics of contemporary work is becoming an unbroken transformation and

performing of
subjectivity. I want to
show that it is precisely
awareness about the
conditions and methods
of a performer's work
(his work with
subjectivity, self, body,
etc.) that can bring
these practices closer to
an autonomous
political and critical

address. In the third chapter titled ‘Production of Sociality’ I tackle participatory art that focuses on social and community relationships, while at the same time I disclose certain processes of work in art, which have – in recent years – put cooperation and

communities to the
forefront. I wish to
show through the
labour of both artists
and audiences, that it is
possible to think the
transformations of the
public aspect of art,
and show how such
relationships should be
placed in relation to
the prevalence of

communicative and
linguistic labour today.
In the fourth chapter
'On Movement,
Duration and Post-
Fordism' I use the case
of contemporary dance
to write about the
central role of
movement in
capitalism, which is
closely related to the

progression of time and the establishment of new, flexible methods of work, and at the same time deeply effects articulation of new bodily practices. I'm interested in how it is possible – when we're thinking about movement as labour – to establish

emancipation from
flexibility and
acceleration of life, and
what is the role of art
in all that. In the fifth
chapter titled 'The
Visibility of Work' I
delve into the
characteristics of the
artist's work and mostly
study how this work is
a part of the production

processes of
contemporary
capitalism (project
work, precarious work,
blurring the line
between life and art). I
study the qualities of
artists' lives specifically
because I'd like to draw
attention to a different
modality of artistic
creation as useless

spending and
potentiality. In this
chapter, I particularly
follow critically,
contemporary
arguments that
advocate the social role
of art; through the
artistic work I also
rethink the argument
about the economic
effectiveness of art.

The main purpose of this book is the affirmation of artistic practice that happens through thinking about the economic and social conditions of the artist's work. Only then can it be revealed that what is a part of speculations of capital is not art itself, but

mostly artistic life. It is the speculation about the ostensible freedom of artistic life that conceals the erasure of art from public space and increases the invisibility of its material and community processes. It turns out that prodigal and creative

work of art today is extremely regulated, precisely because it is so close to, yet with its autonomy, so radically different from life.

In addition to new chapters, the book also contains a series of reworked essays I'd already published elsewhere. I wanted to

retain the diffusion and variety of texts, and not deny conditions in which this theoretical work was mostly created: as a fruit of the very conditions of production and methods of work that I critically reflect upon. The conditions of precarious theoretical

and research work
result in topical
writing, but this
writing can be diffused
and fragmentary,
because it is difficult to
keep its temporal
continuity. At the same
time, one can't naively
believe in the illusory
ability of uninterrupted
transformation that is

required by flexible work. And this is why, when I truly committed myself to writing this book, I found that my work, in different ways over the past few years, was marked by a couple of repeated and topical questions, and that through all the theoretical reflections a

recognisable red thread is woven: an image of an artist at work.

The texts in the book are in large proportion a result of creative exchanges, particularly with other artists and writers throughout Europe, and also a result of numerous artistic and theoretical

collaborations. During my travels, workshops, residencies and lectures I had a privilege to meet young artists and students in different artistic and academic environments and share with them acute and critical questions about the place of contemporary art,

whilst making
numerous friendships
and collaborations that
continue to this day.

I would like to thank
the director of Maska
Publishing Janez Janša
and its editor Amelia
Kraigher. The translator
into English Urška
Zajec worked
meticulously through

the chapters in this
book and gave them
the final form in the
English language. I also
wish to thank many
friends and colleagues
for inspiring
discussions: Ric
Alshopp, Maaike
Bleeker, Toni Cots,
Bojana Cvejić, Danae
Theodoridou, Begum

Ercyas,	Myriam	van	
Imschoot,		Ivana	
Ivković,		Bojan	
Jablanovec,		Janez	
Janša,	Janez	Janša,	Joe
Kelleher,		Gabriele	
Klein,	Bara	Kolenc,	
Andreja	Kopač,	Boyan	
Manchev,		Tomislav	
Medak,		Nana	
Miličinski,		Aldo	
Milohnić,		Bojana	

Mladenović, Ivana
Müller, Nataša Petrešin
Bachelez, Irena Pivka,
Anja Planišček, Goran
Sergej Pristaš, Vlado
Gotvan Repnik, Martina
Ruhsam, Alan Read,
Paz Rojo, Danae
Theodorou, Hooman
Sharifi, Ana Vujanović,
Jasmina Založnik and
Betī Žerovc. And I

gracefully thank Igor
for making love, not
art.

Chapter 1

The Uneasiness of Active Art

We could be easily frozen in this kind of pose, but no, we immediately begin to argue.

(Builders, Chto delat 2005)

It is evident that the video by the British artist Carey Young takes place in one of the numerous offices of a modern high-rise corporation centre. The camera is focused on a woman in a dark blue business suit standing in front of a huge glass office wall. The woman

keeps uttering a single sentence, using different accentuations, gestures and intonations in the process. She seems to be practising as though in a business presentation course. She pays attention to the pronunciation nuances and precise

gesticulation while
practising it over and
over: “I’m the
revolutionary.”¹

This unique exercise
in style is a very good
indication of the
complex situation into
which I want to place
my reflection on the
relationship between
politics and

contemporary art. We live at a time when creativity, a wish for change and constant reflection on creative conditions are the driving forces behind development in the post-industrial world, marked by the need to constantly revolutionize methods

of production and creativity. Young's statement is therefore not only an exercise in style; this kind of 'coaching' is actually essential to the ways of working in contemporary capitalism, especially creative and artistic ways of working. In the

contemporary
corporate world, 'I'm
the revolutionary'
suddenly turns into a
speech act *par
excellence*. The transfer
of the obsession with
social change (which
deeply marked the
twentieth century) into
a transparent sky-
scraper helps us

understand the topical
social and political
situation, which
profoundly affects the
way of thinking on the
connection between
politics and art,
especially on the
changed role of the
autonomy of art today,
which needs to be
closely connected to

artistic work itself.
Today, politics is
frequently understood
as a system of
organized interests, of
bureaucratically
structured activities
planned in advance,
and of organized and
discursively
conceptualized
possibilities, which

include various exercises in style in terms of artistic freedom. According to Slavoj Žižek, we now live in a world where pseudo-activity rather than passivity poses the basic threat. Furthermore, politics almost comes across as an urgency, as a

coercion into constant participation and activity: “People intervene all the time, ‘do something’; academics participate in meaningless debates and so on.”² Žižek places this passivity in the opposition to the contemporary political situation, which, like

many other theorists, he terms post-political, and one where we are faced with the reduction of politics to the expert management of social life.³

Arising from this post-political situation is a profound uneasiness that overcomes us when

discussing the
contemporary
relationship between
politics and art. At first
sight, the art of today
seems insufficiently
engaged; artistic and
creative powers seem
more-or-less isolated
from social contexts. It
appears that today
artistic freedom is

proportionate to artistic
unimportance or the
powerlessness it
exhibits as regards
wider social change.
The need for political
art has never been at
the foreground to the
extent it is now; art has
been called upon to
comment on,
document, discover and

address political themes, as well as to actively intertwine with social and political participation processes.

Isn't this call for the politicization of art – the articulation of forums and conferences where politicization is discussed, of festivals that are being

(sub)titled in this way,
the differentiation
between political and
non-political
generations – a sign of
what Slavoj Žižek terms
‘pseudo-activity’? Isn’t
the art of today deeply
ingrained into the
method of expertly
managing social
interests, a part of the

contemporary urgency
for ceaseless activity?
Act, be active,
participate, always be
ready for opposition,
generate new ideas,
pay attention to
contexts while
constantly reflecting on
your methods of
production... Doesn't
all that stand for the

activity that profoundly
defines the so-called
post-political
condition? In both
visual art and the
performing arts,
political art is actually
in good shape. It
connects contexts, is
topical, provokes,
opens up forms of
participation, is

ceaselessly critical,
reflexive, provocative
and different. Art exists
as the non-stop
production of critical
deviations and
comments that are
organised and
intermediated through
thematically oriented
applications and
pseudo-active models

of the artistic market. Many contemporary art market contexts – exhibitions, productions and festivals – are based on a critical meta-language where art frequently appears as an autonomous field of freedom, different views and provocative

creativity. Along with this meta-language, there is a growing political powerlessness of art, which seems increasingly isolated in its glass revolutionary tower. For this reason, Badiou finds that it is now constantly necessary to actively cover up the

nothingness of what
takes place, and makes
the following statement
at the conclusion of his
manifesto of
affirmationism: “It is
better to do nothing
than to contribute to
the invention of formal
ways of rendering
visible that which
Empire already

recognises as
existent.”⁴ The art of
today seems to be
generated in this field
in-between pseudo-
activity and the quest
for a real effect; it is
profoundly marked by
the loss of the event
and the desire for a
radical cut at the same
time.

The question I will therefore be discussing on many pages of this book is how artistic processes and creation intertwine with political processes, especially when they try to overcome positions of powerlessness and establish a new

relationship with contemporary capitalist processes. I will show that, in order to critically understand this intertwinement of art and politics and also take a step forward from bemoaning the powerlessness of art, we need to rethink the relationship between

art and ways of working. The ways in which the artist works today and the things produced by the artist's work place art intimately close to capitalism.

It is characteristic of the contemporary 'post-political' period that it no longer recognises

the traditional
twentieth century
political artist, termed
'the party-member
artist' by Oliver
Marchart. This artist
sacrifices part of their
autonomy for the good
of heteronomy – i.e.
renounces the
autonomy of art for the
benefit of politics. As

an illustration,
Marchart offers the
well-known dyptichon
by Immendorf situated
under the caption:
*Where do You Stand
with Your Art,
Colleague? (Wo stehts du
mit Deiner Kunst,
Kollege?)* as a painter in
his studio, with
political

demonstrations taking place outside his open door.⁵ According to Marchart, the prevailing model of the political artist from the historical avant-gardes until the end of the 1960s was someone that constantly challenged the limits of autonomy in favour of

politics, someone who constantly demolished the borders between art and other activities, between art and life. Today, this kind of activity seems naive if not anachronistic; contemporary artistic statements are articulated in the direction of the market,

with the emancipatory power of creativity becoming the driving force of capital – whether we like it or not. As Marchart states, there is little we can do but ascribe ideological blindness to an artist who decides on autonomous heteronomy (because

the party-member artist still believes in their own undiminished autonomy). In a world of politics as spectacle, creative economy and capital governed by institutionalized critical and political discourses, it is very hard to believe in the undiminished

autonomy of the
political artist who
presents works at
festivals of 'political
art' and gives rise to
provocative art at
globalized festivals.
Hence part of the
disappointment in the
artistic avant-garde and
neo-avant-garde
practices of the

twentieth century, as
their emancipatory
power of liberating art
and life goes well with
the liberation power of
capital: nowadays,
creativity and artistic
subjectivity are at the
centre of the
contemporary
production of value.

The contemporary

marketing of freedom
and the transfer of
revolutionary themes
from the class struggle
to the hedonistic
entertainment industry
and the creative
industry of ideas has
resulted in today's art
rarely being articulated
along the lines of
revolutionary utopias

and the emancipatory thinking of the future. If this does take place, it is usually in the form of specific pragmatically usable suggestions. For this reason, art frequently focuses on the production of the social; it is becoming a field and place of social

relations, which is discussed in more detail in [Chapter 3](#) of this book. Art frequently articulates its relationship with politics by inventing models of sociality and community, by active participation and interaction, and by means of propositions

of and ways of meeting that constantly give rise to proposals for various forms of activities. This testifies to a problematic relation between art and the community; at the same time, this kind of politicization is close to another important artistic position that

appears chiefly at the end of the twentieth century, replacing so-called party-member art.

According to Marchart, we now frequently face “heteronomous autonomy”⁶ rather than autonomous heteronomy. Today,

this is the prevailing hegemonic model of art. It is no longer about the party-member artist torn between loyalty to art on the one hand and the party on the other. As Marchart states, artists now adopt a position of pseudo-autonomy; they are

subjectivised as
creative joint-stock
personalities or
functioning service
monads. The artist is
their own
(autonomous)
entrepreneur and
heteronomous
(employee) at the same
time. Interestingly
enough, “at the

moment of their greatest heteronomy (market dependence), these market entities harbour an auto-
imagination of full autonomy.”⁷ If the politicization of art actually occurs, this is more or less to appease one’s conscience, to draw from the joint pile

of existing references that are to be discarded and replaced by a more effective offer at the first available opportunity. Although this kind of activity appears less anachronistic and more in accordance with the current social and political shifts, the

basic political
articulation of themes
and contexts is still
dictated by the market.
The political stance of
artists is similar to that
of contemporary
creative industries.
They articulate their
ideas by forming
contexts and
communicative social

situations in advance,
where particular
relations can take place
safely and without
antagonism; this is
where temporary
communities can be
formed, enabling the
participation of
different users, as well
as the contingent and
free-flow of various

interests. It therefore seems as though it is actually the prevailing heteronomy that Žižek terms 'pseudo-activity'.

None of the two prevailing forms of twentieth century politicization give rise to political antagonism nowadays. Autonomous heteronomy is no

longer the kind of politicization that can respond antagonistically to contemporary political reality. The party-member artist no longer has a field of activity; we could say they actually exist without a party. The actions of this kind of

artist do not establish a potential for different political communities and forms of co-existence; today, it is no longer important which side artists sacrifice their autonomy for in terms of leaving art in order to set up a political community.

At the end of 2007, Slovenian theatre saw a very interesting attempt to re-topicalise the avant-garde political stance in *Ragged People/Pupils and Teachers* (*Raztrganci/Učenci in učitelji*), a performance directed by Sebastijan Horvat. Not only did

this engaged rendition
of Matej Bor's agitation
play take a direct
stance on topical
political events
(especially toward the
World War Two
partisan movement in
Slovenia and the
current attempts to
rehabilitate Nazi-
sympathizing White

Guard members), but also connected all this with the universal progressive values of resistance and radical affirmation, attempting to restore forgotten utopian twentieth century themes.

Director Sebastijan Horvat purposely staged *Ragged People* as

an agitation for specific values, choosing its form along the same lines – an almost realistic agitation theatre performance that attempts to affirm the utopia of a more engaged world through a clear narrative about the incongruous oppositions of good and

evil. However, there is a paradox in such autonomous heteronomy, where art makes a direct appeal yet addresses a group of people that has already been formed or 'subjectivised': a similar effect could be achieved if the political subject targeted by the

performance was on the opposite side of the political spectrum. An agitation and production based on the other political perspective and foundations could have been equally successful. The politicization of art by abandoning artistic autonomy in order to

establish progressive
and engaged politics no
longer has a direct
effect in the post-
political world because
the artistic market
offers various
possibilities of political
choice. The spectator
communities
established through
these choices are not

articulated through a political subjectivisation that is difficult and full of contradictions. Quite the opposite: the spectator communities are mainly articulated as pre-established moral communities that are formed along the dividing line between

good and evil, where one's friends are suddenly separated from one's enemies. Today, the need for engaged theatre and art can frequently be discussed along the lines of what Chantal Mouffe terms "politics in the register of morality".⁸ Her

hypothesis is that, due to the disappearance of constitutive antagonism (which forms the essence of the political), political discourse is replaced by moral discourse. It is not that politics has been replaced by morality or that it has become more moral,

but that it takes place
though the register of
morality. Political
antagonisms are
created as moral
categories that
contemporary
communities identify
with and thus become
established in an
imaginary way. It is no
longer about the

antagonism between those addressed by political articulations – between ‘us and them’ as bearers of certain articulations and forms of political subjectivisation. As Chantal Mouffe states, instead of a fight between the left and the right, we nowadays

have a fight between those in the right and those in the wrong.⁹ In this sense, the most radical works include those that do not allow us any possibility of choice, triggering uneasiness regardless of their political orientation – uneasiness at both the

left and the right. This uneasiness is a consequence of the antagonism they create by means of their form (e.g. the Slovenian group Laibach), their anarchism (e.g. many anarchist works by Russian activists, such as Voina or some artistic predecessors at

the beginning of the 1990s like Alexander Brenner or Oleg Kulik), or by means of a direct intervention into life itself (e.g. three Slovenian artists officially changing their name to Janez Janša, the name of former right wing Slovenian Prime Minister).

Therefore, art seems to be in a helpless position from the perspective of heteronymous autonomy as well, especially because artistic subjectivity is now at the centre of new models of creativity. Not only does art frequently

function as an autonomous space of freedom, it also participates in a network of pre-established models of criticality and reflexivity, as a sort of ‘politicisation with reason’, or a choice between ready-made possibilities of

discourse.

In contemporary performing arts, at least in the wider European space, it was held for a decade or so that the political was actually part of the form, of the way we make art, and thereby an answer to the question of what art is. From the middle of

the 1990s onwards,
through the practices of
authors like Jérôme
Bel, Xavier Le Roy,
Janez Janša, Via
Negativa, politicality
was understood
through an endless
questioning and
critique of the theatre
apparatus itself and the
relation to the

audience. According to Bojana Cvejić, such questioning formed a kind of new regime of representation, which forms the tautological character of the performative. Here, the performance always questions and addresses the spectators in their role, leading them “to

reflect upon their history, their taste, their capacity to perceive, the frames of references they should mobilize in order to be able to read the performance.”¹⁰ It is about the problematic status of post-modern theory, which becomes a sort of ‘self-referential

speech act', questioning the role of the spectator and revealing theatre in the role of the dispositive. This self-referentiality of one's own production conditions is at the centre of understanding contemporary post-political and pseudo-activity. Today, the

facts that formed the basis of Benjamin's concept of political art at the beginning of the twentieth century have been radically changed.

In his famous essay *The Author as Producer* (1934), Benjamin rejects any kind of instrumentalisation of art for political

purposes, stating that art is only political in the manner in which it observes the conditions of its own production; this means that it is aware of the production relationships within which it is generated and works towards emancipating these

conditions. This emancipation of one's production conditions, the constant reflection on the models and protocols of production, is tightly connected to the contemporary models of production in the post-industrialised era. The creative solutions,

the reflections on
management
hierarchies and non-
material work forms of
non-material work
constantly place the
author as producer into
the very centre. From
this perspective, we can
even more accurately
understand the
‘powerlessness’ of the

artistic creator,
constantly oscillating
between various
discursive models of
specialized contexts
shaped by curated
contemporary festivals
and many open
methods of production
that have seen market
success.

Since contemporary

politics renounces the constitutive dimension of the political, many philosophers see the political as within a deep caesura that, according to Chantal Mouffe, occurs as an ontic/ontological difference. She therefore proposes a differentiation between

‘politics’ and ‘the political’; politics concerns daily political practices within which order is created, while the political concerns the manner of constituting society with antagonism as an essential characteristic.¹¹ The difference between

politics and the police is also discussed by Rancière. According to him, the police is “organised as a set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organisation of powers, the distribution of the places and roles, and

the system of legitimising this distribution.”¹²

Contrary to that, politics is an activity that breaks up this unity of processes and interferes with the orderly configuration of the sensual. This makes politics profoundly linked to change;

politics “is first and foremost a conflict regarding the scene in common, regarding the existence and status of those who are present there”.¹³ Although this difference, as established by philosophers when they want to think politically, could also

be ascribed to the philosophical separation of the notion from its actuality in order to reveal its essence, this is not the main reason behind it.

This kind of differentiation between politics and the political itself – in order to return to its

constitutive dimension – is also a consequence of something that is directly revealed to us through the speech act practice taking place in the film by the British artist Carey Young. It is not about living in a post-political world; this addition of *post-* actually springs from

the considerably more difficult option of creating forms of reality through which communities are established. We cannot ignore the fact that the political effects people's communities. The simple fact that, when we want to talk about the political, the first

problems we encounter
are connected to
language (in which we
articulate political and
life's ways of being),
brings us to the
problem discussed by
Giorgio Agamben: the
exploitation of life
forms common to
mankind establish the
social conditions of

capitalism. Agamben states that language is one of the basic forms of the communal. By means of language, people have always been able to realise themselves in terms of the truest path of human existence: they have been able to materialize their own

essence as a possibility
or potentiality.¹⁴

The inability to
realise one's own
essence as a possibility
or potentiality, which
springs from the
exploitation of the
forms of the communal
that are most related to
life, experiences its
apotheosis in the

democratic spectacle of
organizing activity and
interests. If we wish to
think of the political in
relation to art beyond
the caesura and
actually connect art
with the essence of the
political, then what
primarily needs to be
rethought is the post-
political approach,

where 'the political is truly in shape' or, we might even say, in vogue. This different approach is no longer just a consequence of the perspective that there is always something that needs to be deconstructed, e.g. the theatrical apparatus, the spectator

or the context. Today, this protocol frequently comes across as politically ineffective, especially when we reflect on the political in the direction of insoluble antagonism. This means that we need to profoundly rethink the status of so-called critical art,

which has become one of the most important ways for art to connect with forms of contemporary life and take political stances.

The critical art of today continues the active, progressive political role of avant-garde art without actually having a

proper addressee. Art may provoke, show different views, warn and take critical stances, but there are few cases where it interferes with ways of being so radically that it can actually open up possibilities for life that lies ahead. It can be topical, but rarely does

that topicality shatter
the form through which
it is established.
According to Rancière,
the relationship
between politics and
art is not a relationship
between two separate
partners. Art brings to
politics what politics
already contains: art
makes visible the

division of the sensible, an articulation of the political field that is closely connected to the being of the community.¹⁵

Here, we can agree with Rancière that politics does not consist of “relations of power, it consists of the relationships between

worlds".¹⁶ In this sense, the political subjectivisation that can take place in theatre, for instance, is not the recognition of the community as it already is, nor is it the recognition of those who are right or the recognition of things we have in common.

Subjectivisation gives rise to a certain new multitude that calls for a different kind of enumeration. “Political subjectivisation divides anew the experiential field though which everyone’s identity and share has been bestowed.”¹⁷ Every subjectivisation is

therefore also a dis-identification, a painful and paradoxical process of being torn out of the place of the usual political order. The basic question on the relationship between art and politics is therefore that of the antagonistic and inevitable place of the

communal, which
concerns possible
material and perceptive
paths of life still to
come. In this sense, art
is firmly intertwined
with questions
concerning the
conditions and
possibilities of life
itself; art interferes
with the disclosure of

potential modes of common realities. Art is therefore not articulated within the discursive contexts of self-referentiality and critical distance from its own self, but directly challenges and demolishes a colourful range of contexts in which it appears and

becomes visible, and at the same time, does not consent to the reduction of art to a moral and didactic stance. The new political effect of art could therefore be sought “producing situations from the assumption that the capacity to act is larger

than the pre-given institutional means to realize it; that the potentiality is really different from the possibility understood as opportunity in the institutional market.”¹⁸

This is why the continuation of this book will deal with various methods of

artistic work; I am of the opinion that these methods are closely connected to the question of the political powerlessness or power of art. The question central to this book, is the following: how and what does art actually produce in contemporary

capitalism? Studying the artist at work reveals many traits of the ambivalent closeness of art and capitalism. On the one hand, the work of the artist is at the core of capital speculations on art's value; on the other hand, by means of its work, art also resists

the appropriation of its artistic powers. Artistic work is the focus of my interest because it allows us to analyse some important characteristics of the development of contemporary art in the last few decades and especially the changes in the forms of artistic

autonomy that
appeared with the
increasing closeness of
art and life. The aim of
my book is therefore to
note that these changes
are closely connected
to the changes in
contemporary
capitalism and the
entry of post-Fordist
ways of production into

the centre of
contemporary
production.

Chapter 2

The Production of Subjectivity

2.1. The Crisis of Subjectivity

In an interview in which he critically reevaluates the use of one of his key terms,

‘immaterial labour’,
Maurizio Lazzarato
states that, when
describing the traits of
contemporary
capitalism, it is better
to talk about the
production of
subjectivity rather than
immaterial or cognitive
labour. The production
of subjectivity is at the

core of capitalism, or as Lazzarato puts it, is actually its greatest effect – “the single largest commodity we produce, because it goes into the production of all other commodities.”¹⁹

Lazzarato’s production of subjectivity hints at the standardisation of

the social, affective and common aspects of the contemporary human being. These are at the core of production and essentially contribute to the creation of value. They result in a radical individualisation as well as a homogenisation of subjectivity; the

production of the models of subjectivity is at the centre of capitalism.

Contemporary society places great emphasis on creativity, imagination and dynamism, but these human powers have never before been as standardised and

intertwined with what Foucault terms self-governance. Described by Franco Berardi Bifo as ‘semiocapitalism’, post-Fordist ways of working centre around thought, language and creativity as the primary tools for the production of value.²⁰ Experimentation with

subjectivity (in terms of its imagination, creativity and time), the changed ways of working that bring work close to political activity (Virno), and the interiorisation of the microdynamics of power (Deleuze) are at the core of the contemporary

generation of capitalist value. This thesis becomes especially interesting when applied to the development of contemporary art in the second half of the twentieth century, which takes place at the centre of the rebellion against the

standardisation of modern life and the revaluation of the relationship between art and life. The contemporary status of art is highly controversial; it is closely connected to contemporary modes of the production of subjectivity, which

makes it function as a creative, affective and social power that is becoming increasingly fused with other forms of creative production. At the same time, there is still a strong belief in the emancipatory and autonomous utopian power of art. It seems that the more political

and socially engaged art is, the more it actually becomes isolated from its social and political power.

Since the second half of the twentieth century at least, the crisis of subjectivity has been at the centre of many emancipatory and experimental

artistic practices –
especially in
performance, dance
and visual art. It is not
so much about the
crisis of political
subjectivity as it is
about the establishment
of new forms of the
disintegrated, no longer
hierarchically
organised subject.

Subjectivity is no longer established through an authentic core. We can no longer talk about a proportionate relationship between the subject's inside and outside; subjectivity turns outward as an empty process, a disintegrated structure

of language and gesture (as e.g. by Beckett). Many experimental and neo-avant-garde practices are linked to Artaud's demand for a 'body without organs', which refers to a radical refusal of any kind of 'organisation' of organism.²¹ At the same time, many

artistic practices seem to be connected with Bataille's affirmation of negativity as a transformational force connecting the forces of becoming and the power of affirmation with negativity. The subject therefore frequently exists as a pulsating sum of

various conflicting powers and forces. At its forefront are the negativity of becoming and the desiring dimension of power, which make it more of an assemblage of various traces and intensities. In contemporary dance and performance, this

loss of the subject's
centre (where the
subject no longer is the
locus of truth)
influences new creation
procedures and the
poetics of bodily and
speech gestures. The
crisis of subjectivity
also radically interferes
with the forms of
embodiment on stage,

shifting the origin of bodily motion to the outside and to everyday life, and opening the space of subjectivity to the experimentation with transformation and negativity. Such a crisis of subjectivity is also connected to another trait of art in recent decades – the

increasing closeness of art and life, which shifts autonomy from the subject's interior to the exterior independence of the material processes of being, to the volatile flow of life and being.

The crisis of subjectivity becomes highly interesting in

connection with
production in
contemporary
capitalism, especially
with the way in which
experimenting with
subjectivity is at the
centre of capitalist
production. The
appearance of
numerous critiques of
art on account of its

similarity to post-Fordist ways of working is not coincidental. What art and capitalism have especially in common is the dangerous and seductive closeness of the appropriation of life. In my opinion, many critiques that reflect on the similarity

between art and capitalism overlook the central role of life and the role of experimentation with subjectivity in capitalism. The constant flexibility and transformation of the crisis of subjectivity are the central investing and consuming forces

that drive the
production of life.
Today, the crisis of
subjectivity has lost the
emancipatory potential
that it had in the
artistic practices of the
1960s and 1970s, or at
least needs to rethink
and implement this
potential in an entirely
new manner. The main

reason for this
powerlessness is the
fact that today's human
being is confronted
with a brutal
intensification of
individualisation
processes, described by
Lazzarato as the
production of
subjectivity. Old forms
of life become obsolete

even before they can actually be absorbed. This opens up the way for subjectivity, which experiences its transformation through constant existential paradoxes. This makes us live in a constant state of tension, at the edge of anxiety; it is this state that causes an

increase in our investments.

“Moreover, the process is intensified even further by the fact that this aggravated tension and speeded-up power of invention not only nourish capital but actually constitute its principal source of value, its most

profitable investment.”²² The performance art and dance of the second half of the twentieth century often centred upon this ‘radical consumption’, the intense power of transformation through which the crisis of subjectivity enters the

field of performance as
a power, a force of
negativity, and a
conglomerate of affects
and desires. In this
context, I see radical
consumption as the
consumption of the
body, presence, human
actions and abilities,
physical strength,
spiritual power and

affects; it aims to intervene into the intersubjective and productive nature of subjectivity and, in this way, also open up the relationship between performers and spectators. It drives the live communicative situations in contemporary

performance beyond
the conventional,
established
representations and
powers of signification;
this also holds for
theatre interested in
research into human
energies, affects, the
disclosure of new
modes of acting and
performativity (René

Pollesch, Ivica Bujan, Rodrigo Garcia etc.). The live event therefore becomes a unique field for testing the effects of radical consumption, a field for practicing inter-subjectivity, exchange and testing live communicative situations, for a rivet between the body and

its expression (gesture, language, movement). This expression also points to the contemporary status of consumption as the main economic power that contemporary society and culture understand as an affirmative force of progress and success:

the more we consume,
the better off we'll be.
According to Pfaller,
contemporary
consumption takes
place in a very special
way: we spend by not
really enjoying it and
constantly limit the
excesses of life.²³ In
this sense, today's
consumption is a

neurotic force. It offers us the illusion of endless transformation, but that transformation is without negativity – a standardised transformation of the subject. In the continuation, I therefore wish to argue that, in recent decades, a shift has taken place

in the understanding of subjectivity and the status of radical consumption; this shift is connected to the social and cultural shifts of post-industrial capitalism. Subjectivity is at the core of methods of production and contemporary work processes. At the

same time,
consumption is
becoming a negative
force destroying the
traditional common
ways of being and life
as such. In this sense,
the relationship
between art and the
mechanisms of
subjectivity need to be
rethought since this

would enable us to
intervene in many
interesting relations
between art and
politics.

Radical consumption
in art is a consequence
of the crisis of the
subject, or that of the
need for the visibility
of the subject's
constitution and split

nature. Established through this visibility of the subject are the radical critique of essentialism and patriarchal structure of the subject. The visibility of the subject could also be described as a way of transgression and resistance to

authenticity. The disclosure of the subject's negativity as a constitutive moment of subjectivisation has deeply marked the theatrical reforms of performing and ways of presence in performance art and live art. It also effects the formation of new

spectator relations.
However, it also
constitutes the
foundation of the
'emancipatory' power
of art, especially its
resistance to the rigid
ways of contemporary
life. In contemporary
performance, the live
event often becomes an
opportunity for the

radical consumption of the subject, an event without repetition²⁴, for a radical use of the body and a phenomenological blurring of the border between perception and the visible, the body and its edge. The potential power of the live event is often seen

in this liberating power
of negativity. This
negativity not only
breaks down the border
between the stage and
the spectator, but
radically shifts the
symbolic mandate of
the actor and the
spectator. It shatters
the safe conventions
within which the live

artistic event is
supposed to take place.
The crisis of the subject
is also at the core of
acting reforms and
research into how to
embrace the
consumption of the
energy and power of
acting, how to fight
fake efficiency, open
the intercommunicative

potential of theatre and establish a split between presence and representation. The private, the intimate and the most hidden thus enter performance through the main entrance, but not as cheap exhibitionism (as strengthened by the low-end voyeurism on

the other side). It is rather a rebellion against the rigid structures of power and a confrontation with the conventional apparatus of representation. The split within the subject namely becomes visible through the absence of equality between

presence and representation, which is at the core of every subjectivisation process.²⁵

When discussing this openness of the economy of looking and the dialectic of the pleasure of the spectator, this desiring participation that

convinces us of the inter-subjectivity of performing, we should ask ourselves if this isn't something that exists as a more problematic side of the live event today. Doesn't performing the crisis of subjectivity cover up a basic commodification of the

artistic event, the political powerlessness of performance, performance art and the body's action? In other words, do the radical actions of the body's rebellion against rigid power structures not make it succumb to power even more? It is not so much about

radical consumption no longer filling us with strong affects, shame or disgust, i.e. about it stopping to disclose the desire on the part of the one watching. We can still be shocked, surprised and also exposed in our symbolic mandate of the spectator; we can

still be called in what Erika Fischer-Lichte terms the 'feedback loop'.²⁶ Nevertheless, the potentiality of radical consumption seems to have been profoundly weakened; it appears to have lost the bowstring upon which its arrow was to rest. This strong affect,

as well as the disclosure of desire and inter-subjectivity, are at the core of the contemporary structures of power – the methods of producing and controlling social relations. “The more diverse, even erratic, the better. Normality is

losing its support. The regularities begin to loosen. This loosening of normality is part of the dynamics of capitalism. It is not simply about liberation. It is about the form of power/authority characteristic of capitalism. This is no longer a disciplinary

institutional
power/authority that
determines everything,
but power/authority in
order to produce
diversity – because
markets get saturated.
Even the weirdest
affective tendencies are
in order – as long as
they bring money.”²⁷

This loosening of

normality is problematic because, according to Massumi, there is a sort of relationship today between the dynamics of power and rebellion, where the strategies of rebellion can no longer be simply extracted. The exact opposite is taking place: the field

of relationships
between people, our
ethical values, actions,
desires, expectations,
shameful bizarreness
(no matter what pure
expectations and
possibilities it may be
connected to), and
desiring exchange – all
this forms the surplus
value of contemporary

economics. Radical
consumption (not in
the sense of money but
energy, human
possibilities and
actions) is at the core
of the spirit of
contemporary
capitalism, where
protestant asceticism
has been replaced by
the imperative of

(ascetic) pleasure. The crisis of the subject thus reveals itself as an endless barrage of human abilities, actions and aspirations, the driving force of contemporary non-material production: one needs to be and constantly persist in a state of crisis in order

to be even more creative. Today, consumption in art hardly seems to be a sign of liberation, a grand-scheme sensorial openness that would help us again place ourselves as subjects, because the tension we are supposed to resist no longer exists. In the

continuation of the book, I will try to show that consumption itself should be read in a different way: the tension we need to resist is the one that regulates the lavish material artistic practices.

It seems that radical consumption directly

gives rise to a new form of power – the power springing from the loosening and fluidity of our desires, or from the power arising from our need for liberation and transformation – from the imperative that we should be as shameless as possible in all of this. This

ambivalent place of shame in relationship to radical consumption is shown quite convincingly by the performances of the Slovenian group Via Negativa. The performances by Via Negativa were created as part of a long-duration research

project by the director
Bojan Jablanovec;
together with his
performers, Jablanovec
studies the acting
strategies of presenting,
ways of presence and
creating new
communicative
relationships with the
audience. The work by
Via Negativa is chiefly

subject to analyses
concentrating on the
dynamic of exchange
and the role of the
audience.

It seems to me that
its work can also be
viewed from a broader
perspective – in the
context of a wider
economic exchange in
which we participate

day by day and where we are invited as desiring and 'investing' subjects.²⁸

Many performances by Via Negativa are radical yet cynical in nature and therefore do not give rise to emancipatory or inter-subjective effects; they cause uneasiness and provocation, but

also a feeling of void or resignation concerning one's own passivity, sometimes also shame. Via Negativa's research namely employs the radical consumption of the subject and the body (with its fluids, openings, physical exhaustion, repetitiveness, mental

concentration) in the
forms of confession,
using them as a
strategy to achieve
inter-communication
and a shift of the
function of the
spectator. In this sense,
Via Negativa
consistently follows
performance art
practices or

phenomenological
destruction of the live
event; placed into the
centre are the body and
the shaping of the
subject as a means of
dealing with the
availability and
achievement of
affective reactions.
Consumption does not
really have a concrete

place in Via Negativa's research; it is rigid, unsuccessful and empty, as though it were clear in advance that the selected strategy would not have an effect. At the moment it could become 'something' its every meaning and purpose is abolished.

The works by Via
Negativa organise and
literally perform the
mechanisms of
subjectivisation, which
directly connects them
with the questions on
the relationship
between
subjectivisation and
contemporary
production, with issues

of the role of the
processes of
subjectivisation in
contemporary
capitalism. At the same
time, their works
constantly profane
every excess of the
spectator's or actor's
investment; frequently,
the consumption of
acting or performance

energies purposely
leave little more left
than what actually
happens; the
consumption does not
have a symbolic
justification.

A further trait of
these performance art
pieces is that they
frequently revolve
around a confession,

especially in the first part of their research, focussing on the seven capital vices. The results of their research project are presented in the form of short performances as a series of confessions; their point of utterance is always the individuality of each

participating actor or actress. It is also important that the utterance never remains at the level of speech: everything that is uttered triggers a real action. The truths uttered by the participants about themselves and their work are performances

because the language of the confession not only describes reality but also establishes and changes it. The truths uttered by the participants are therefore not existentialist in nature. Their 'reality' only shows itself through action; it is a result of

the intertwining of verbal and non-verbal actions. At the same time, however, the truths uttered by the participants are not essentialist truths; their 'real character' only becomes apparent through action, as a result of the intertwinement of

verbal and non-verbal actions on stage. This does not mean that the confession and action are harmonious in the relationship between cause and effect. It is more about a radical alienation of speech and action, the establishment of an empty place where the

performance art of the person can be established.²⁹

Interestingly, what is confessed is often not only an intimate fact, but also closely connected to the work performed by the person confessing: with acting or performance 'labour', and indirectly

also with theatre as the point of utterance. The subject's hunt for the real is paradoxically framed into the (public) work performed by the participants in the scenes, who simultaneously admit its shortcomings. We seem to witness a

public form of
'penitence', a
contemporary version
of the flagellates. We
can only participate if
we are also ready to
accept the abominable
dregs of the real (the
medium of spoken
confession is namely
the body with its fluids
and openings), and thus

confess our own
obscene pleasure. But
the confession in the
Via Negativa project is
not only a way of
pointing out the
voyeuristic economy of
the spectator's
exchange and pleasure,
where the actor's body
and action are
established as those of

a victim in order for us to be able to see or in order for the obscene to surface. The Via Negativa project does not stop at moralism, but sharpens the theatrical situation into a dispositif of public subjectivisation. Their works are organised. In other words, they

literally perform the mechanisms of subjectivisation, which directly connect them with questions on the relationship between subjectivisation and contemporary production. Especially if we consider that we frequently work today by performing our own

selves. In a way, we all are actors in the way we work, while work is increasingly becoming public. We can therefore also view the performances by Via Negativa as research into the role of the processes of subjectivisation in contemporary

capitalism. An important trait of the contemporary way of working is the consumption of subjectivity, the only way of opening the chance for us to produce even more.³⁰

Foucault writes that as the dispositif of subjectivisation (i.e. the

manner in which the subject is established and its singularity articulated), confession entered Western culture already in the nineteenth century, when it replaced the classic dispositif of remorse by new forms of power and ruling. “We have since become

a singularly confessing society. The confession has spread its effects far and wide. It plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites; one confesses

one's crimes, one's sins,
one's thoughts and
desires, one's illnesses
and troubles; one goes
about telling, with the
greatest precision,
whatever is most
difficult to tell. One
confesses in public and
in private, to one's
parents, one's
educators, one's doctor,

to those one loves; one admits to oneself, in pleasure and in pain, things it would be impossible to tell anyone else, the things people write books about. One confesses—or is forced to confess.”³¹ Confession is something that does not come from the

outside as a
consequence of the
subject's discipline, but
is actually the
governance over the
subject's inside by the
subject themselves; it
becomes part of the
techniques of self-
control and self-
governance, so
characteristic of the

functioning of
contemporary power.
Confessions are often
made in art as well.
Today, confession has
become a way of
producing truth: truth
can only become visible
or come to the surface
by means of confession.
Truth will out, and if it
fails to reveal itself, one

needs to get rid of the limitations that prevent this from happening. Only by means of confession can we establish our singularity, in which the following essential rule must be observed: I must incessantly utter what is hardest to say. In order to achieve

that, I need to feel confession as a deeply personal, intimate need. Foucault writes that this need and obligation to confess have been so deeply internalized that we no longer feel it as an effect of power. It is no longer felt as an effect of dominance, but

becomes a deep intimate need – proof that we are capable of changing. Foucault connects the need to confess with the analysis of the new forms of power and control, which are no longer connected to traditional disciplining techniques but make

use of refined forms of self-control, which could also be termed self-governance. His analysis is still quite topical, especially given the various forms of subjectivisation available to us as users of and workers in today's labour market. We are subjects that are

continuously capable of
transforming,
exhausting and selling
the most intimate
within us (for this is
where our essence is
supposed to lie). As
Peter Klepec finds, we
always need to be free
enough to make
confessions, feel
confession as our

innermost need, and at the same time be shameless and flexible enough to reject and utterly profane the very truth we have reached and disclosed with such great difficulty. If we constantly utter what is hardest to say, then what is told is no longer of particular

secrecy.³²

It is not unusual today for confession to be turned into a media spectacle; it is not so much about ‘cheap’ spectacle and uninformed voyeuristic spectators, but about a radical change in the manner of controlling and shaping

contemporary
subjectivity. Confession
is not a disclosure
where someone shows
themselves as they
really are, but a
mechanism of
subordination and part
of the flexible
subjectivisation
enabled by
contemporary society

and its numerous
dispositives (of a
technological, political
and economic nature).
Today, our surplus lies
primarily in the fact
that we are subjects
about whom something
new can always be
discovered; we
constantly need to
reveal and topicalise

our potential abilities.
“The statement ‘you
lack potential’ is much
more devastating than
‘you messed up.’ It
makes a more
fundamental claim
about who you are. It
conveys uselessness in
a more profound
sense.”³³

There is another

important trait framing
Via Negativa's artistic
work into highly
topical contradictions
of subjectivisation and
pointing out the
problematic status of
the radical
consumption of the
performer. The
confessions uttered by
the performers and

triggering
scenes/actions are
closely connected to
the work they do – to
the expectations and
social/professional
status of the
persons/actors
speaking, almost to
certain ‘professional
ethics’. The sinfulness
or research of human

weaknesses can be connected to the classical findings of Max Weber about a rational lifestyle, based on the idea of profession and the spirit of capitalism, which puts one's "professional duty"³⁴ first. This profoundly changes our

relationship to the
hidden and the
intimate: it is no longer
about the dark
sinfulness of our
untameable flesh, but
about any kind of
secrecy related to
professional asceticism,
to the imperative of
work; in this, human
weakness is regarded as

a consequence of the irrational consumption of property. The cardinal vice in the ideal of professional asceticism is therefore that of the void of consumption of human abilities and actions. What needs to be added to this realisation is an important characteristic

of the present time, or
of current social
relations. Today,
professional asceticism,
the active realisation of
the human will in
professions (as
discussed by Weber),
has been replaced by
the imperative of
'professional'
enjoyment. Now, we

must incessantly
consume human
abilities and actions. If
we wish to work
successfully, we must
come across as relaxed
as possible, babble as
much as possible, be as
shameful, flexible and
creative as possible,
enjoy and show all of
our potentiality and be

critical to boot.
Furthermore, we must
do this publicly because
contemporary work
increasingly takes place
before the eyes of
another.

In this sense, the
performer becomes the
ideal virtuoso worker
of contemporary
capitalism, producing

‘communication through the means of communication’; the means are the language and actions of the body. This claim can also be connected to the disappearance of the differences between various kinds of human activity – work, political activity and

intellect as described by Virno, who also points out that our manner of working today is the same as that of politicians. We work with our own communication means and before the eyes of others (publicly), i.e. by performing for others. The fact that

work is political also means that work becomes performative – it takes place through communication and speech acts.³⁵ We work by means of our affective, intimate, communicational and human powers whose transformation and flexibility must always

be performance-oriented; they need to have an effect. It is therefore no coincidence that, in recent years, the use of the word 'performer' has been increasingly used in place of 'actor' or 'dancer'. The term 'performer' is supposed to have a wider, more

interdisciplinary nature, not limited in advance in terms of the ‘technical’ knowledge of individual genres, which enables a more liberal naming of the activity. However, the performer is also skilled at a specific technique – the self-performing or radical consumption of

their own powers for
the processes of the
constant transformation
of bodily states and
affective powers.
Herein lies the core of
the cynicism that
underlies the tasks of
the actors and
performers in the
aforementioned Via
Negativa scenes, as

well as our own
attitude to the actions
performed. Radical
senseless consumption
is also a reflection of
the expected excess of
transformation that
does not take place.
The work that drives us
to 'go into ourselves
fully and completely',
both socially and

artistically, actually
produces nothing of
value. This results in a
radically failed
subjectivisation,
powerlessness and
impotent promises that
are never realised. This
radical failure can be
connected to the
production of
subjectivity in

capitalism: the more we
are invited to be
creative, political,
revolutionary and
dynamic in our ways of
working, the more
standardised and
controlled our
subjectivity becomes;
our only freedom
becomes that of utter
individuality, which

can be selected in the
market of
homogenously
individualised offers.

2.2. Problems with Profanation

Contemporary forms of
subjectivisation are also
discussed by Giorgio
Agamben. In one of his

short essays, he sets the hypothesis that desubjectivisation is at the heart of today's crisis of the subject. For Agamben, the subject is always a result of the relationship between living beings and dispositives, in which the dispositif – as a conglomerate of

practices, tasks,
processes, inclusions
and exclusions – must
always imply some
process of
subjectivisation;
without
subjectivisation, the
dispositif would be
sheer violence.³⁶
Agamben defines the
dispositif (apparatus) as

“literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions or discourses of living beings.”³⁷

Interestingly, Agamben compares the structure of the *dispositif* to the

dispositif of remorse,
which brings us back to
the topic of confession:
the need for the
disclosure of the
subject (necessary for it
to become the subject
at the core of early
modern
subjectivisation).

Agamben writes that
there is always a

double dynamic at work in the dispositif. In the case of remorse, the new self is constituted through negation; at the same time, the negation allows it to get the old self back again. The subject thus needs to split in order to be able to find its truth and

become a subject. In Agamben's terms: the subject finds its truth in the non-truth of its sinful self. This brings us back to the crisis of the subject, which Agamben defines as the distinction that takes place through every constituting of the subject. As already

mentioned, this
distinction, the
disclosure of the
presence in this point
of distinction, crisis and
tension, represents an
important part of the
history of performance
art. In this way, the live
event forms new
dispositifs of observing,
which make us direct

witnesses to the
subjectivisation
process. Performance
art often affirms itself
as a sort of open
negativity, the
emancipatory power of
differentiation and
transformation; for this
reason, negativity
always produces some
sort of symbolic

surplus, however
disgusting and
repulsive it may be.
The fact that this
potentiality of
negativity nowadays
shows itself as
something problematic,
or as something
radically powerless and
completely
commodified, is a

misunderstanding, and can be ascribed to what Agamben defines as a change in the dispositifs we deal with in the current phase of capitalism. It is necessary to go one step further and say that, today dispositives “no longer act as much through the production

of a subject, as through the processes of what can be called desubjectification.”³⁸

What actually happens is that the two processes, subjectivisation and desubjectivisation, abolish the difference between them; since there is no more

distinction, the place of recomposition of the new subject becomes lost. “In the non-truth of the subject, its own truth is no longer at stake.”³⁹

If applied to the history of radical consumption in art, Agamben’s finding effects the accepted

narrative and
understanding of
performance art as an
artistic form.

Performance art has
always been about the
process (of
subjectivisation,
objectivisation, etc.);
something happens or
shifts. As spectators, we
literally enter the split

and by entering it, we
are addressed as
subjects. Due to
changes in the ways
that the networks of
practices, manners and
actions direct
subjectivisation
nowadays (i.e. the
changes resulting from
the fact that today's
daily human actions,

ways and practices are becoming the driving force of contemporary production), the dispositifs are forever multiplied. According to Agamben, they are also accompanied by excessive proliferation of subjectivisation processes. We live in a time of endless choices

between subjectivities,
identities and
opportunities; at the
same time however,
subjectivity seems to
profoundly elude us.
Despite the vastly
increasing number of
dispositives through
which we can establish
ourselves as subjects,
even the most common

of our daily activities are controlled by these processes, which, paradoxically, give us the freedom of realizing ourselves. Although we are driven by strong desire, we do not acquire subjectivity, only a new form of control. Let us go back to theatre and the

powerlessness of
radical consumption:
have the numerous
contemporary ways of
subjectivisation and the
diversity and flexibility
of the market of
contemporary
subjectivities not
radically delineated the
choice of practices in a
live event, or radically

narrowed its political
and transgressive
potentiality? Isn't the
powerlessness of the
action in art precisely
in this blockade
(constant
desubjectivisation) of
contemporary ways of
being – this expansion
of the masquerade of
actualisation of

everything we do – and accompanies us in our daily and professional lives?

Any utterance is closely connected to subjectivisation; when we speak up, we get subjectivised and subordinated at the same time; through speech, we get our

action from the power
we resist.⁴⁰ Agamben
finds that, in
contemporaneity, the
dynamics of
subordination and
establishment
aggravates because the
division between the
processes of
subjectivisation and
desubjectivisation

disappears. What remains is 'non-violent subordination', a voluntary slavery where no subjectivity can be acquired. These new ways of subjectivisation also have a completely different connection to profanation, which Agamben defines as a

procedure by means of which “what was captured and divided by means of apparatuses, is set free and returned to common use.”⁴¹

Agamben connects his reflections on profanation with the role of religion, which he defines as “what

detaches things, places, people, animals and persons from the common use and transports them to a separate sphere.”⁴²

Profanation therefore means the returning of these things to common use and can also be understood as the “anti-apparatus that restores

to common use what
sacrifice has separated
and divided.”⁴³

Profanation is a
powerful procedure
because it neutralises
what it profanes; it
takes the aura away
from things and people.
Profanation is a highly
important procedure in
twentieth century art

and is deeply inscribed in the paradoxical relationship between art and life. Art is thereby established as a sort of field of radical events, a field of the potentiality of rebelling against the rigid structures of contemporary life; art also enables the

autonomy of the
artistic object. It is the
political process that
triggers inter-
subjectivity in the
performance;
phenomenological
openness is only
possible if something is
in common use, if it is
exempt from
separation. We need to

consider a radical
change in
contemporary life
concerning the
potentiality of
profanation as the
process of returning
things to common use.
Agamben namely
points out that we live
in a time of profoundly
changed dispositives as

processes of
desubjectivisation,
which makes the
profanation procedures
so much more difficult.
Capitalism establishes
itself as the sort of
system that, in its final
stage, becomes a
system for embracing
all profane behaviours
(transgression,

rebellion, negativity,
provocation, radical
consumption, etc.). In
this sense, capitalism is
a religion targeting the
absolutely ‘non-
profanable’; in its
extreme form,
capitalism embodies
“the pure form of
separation, without
anything left to

separate. Absolute profanation, which has no residue, henceforth coincides with a kind of consecration, which is equally empty and integral.”⁴⁴ It is not a coincidence that Agamben sees the realisation of this dream of the absolutely non-profanable in the

most profane:
pornography.

Pornography could be denoted as the ultimate trait of production; indeed, the most active (current) form of capitalism comes across as utterly obscene.

Profane problems are also discussed by the philosopher Peter

Klepec, who states that profanation has become impossible, or better put, that this gesture requires special procedures nowadays.⁴⁵ If we connect this premise with contemporary art, especially with the potentiality of radical consumption, we are

faced with a deep
problem as far as
radical experience in
art is concerned. This
feeling is further
strengthened by the
fact that, today,
procedures of artistic
profanation exist as
objects of value (e.g.
many body art and
performance art

documents constitute
an important part of
numerous
contemporary art
collections, with
performance art
stepping into the
mainstream artistic
market on a grand
scale). “A perplexing
phenomenon has
occurred in the past

seven years: the blob of the mainstream has devoured the lingo and imagery of the much touted 'margin' – the thornier and more sharp-edged, the better – and 'performance' has literally turned into a sexy marketing strategy and pop genre. I call this phenomenon the

‘mainstream
bizarre.’”⁴⁶ There is
also a parallel entry of
radical experience into
the museum. According
to Agamben, today, the
museum is not a given
physical space or place,
but “the separate
dimension to which
what was once – but is
no longer – felt as true

and decisive has moved.”⁴⁷ The museum is therefore the sacred space where something has sought refuge that was once felt as real; there is no possibility of use, being and experience. The museum is therefore the space where profane artistic

procedures are isolated and given an almost ritualistic character, again returning to the field of the sacred rather than the common. We can therefore observe the deterritorialisation of spaces of obscenity and the fact that, today, there are new divorces

taking place between the common and what is taken out of the common and placed upon display. In my opinion, this is closely connected to new forms of subjectivity, where experimentation and the crisis of the subject drive the production of signs and gestures,

which shifts the values about the importance of artistic gestures. These new values can best be analysed using examples of change in the work of the performer.

2.3. The Work of the Performance

Artist

A good example of the fact that the production of subjectivity (and consequently its exploitation) is at the core of contemporary culture can be found in an interesting conflict between two ‘matrons’ of the performance and

experimental art of the second half of the twentieth century, which took place in the autumn of 2011 and immediately became viral news on numerous social networks. The case reveals many paradoxes surrounding the contemporary social and cultural role

of performance art and body art, as well as the complex role of performance art in contemporary capitalism.

In 2011, Marina Abramović was invited to collaborate as guest artist at the Los Angeles Museum Gala, considered one of the

most prestigious events in contemporary visual art. The evening is primarily conceived as a dinner with the museum donors; every year, it is co-designed by an artistic or pop-culture celebrity. The event is quite well-known and notorious, especially in recent

years, with many popular stars having collaborated as guests (e.g. Lady Gaga, Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, etc.). In 2011, the honour was bestowed upon Marina Abramović; as creative director of the event; she also invited the singer Debbie Harry.

Individual seats at the gala dinner cost between 25,000 and 100,000 USD, with the proceedings also used as a donation to the museum. Abramović has recently prepared a number of grand-scale revivals and reconstructions of her performance art pieces

(the most well-known is the exhibition/event *The Artist is Present*, MOMA, New York, 2010). For the gala dinner, she organized an audition to select the performers for a reconstruction of her work *Nude with Skeleton* (2002) and other performative actions

that were to take place. Over 800 people applied, of which ‘only’ 200 were invited to audition. Some of those auditioning declined to collaborate subsequently. One of them notified the well-known American choreographer and video artist Yvonne

Rainer on her reasons for this. Together with art critic Douglas Crimp and visual artist Taisha Paggett, Rainer wrote an indignant letter of protest to the museum director Jeffrey Deitch. The letter criticized the collaboration conditions at the event and denoted them as

exploitive: “Ms
Abramović is so
wedded to her original
vision that she – and by
extension, the Museum
director and curators –
don’t see the egregious
associations for the
performers, who,
though willing, will be
exploited nonetheless.
Their desperate

voluntarism says something about the generally exploitative conditions of the art world such that people are willing to become decorative table ornaments installed by a celebrity artist in the hopes of somehow breaking into show biz themselves. And at sub-

minimal wages for the performers, the event is economic exploitation as well, verging on criminality.”⁴⁸ Rainer’s information source was the choreographer and dancer Sarah Wookey.

Several days after the reaction of Rainer and her colleagues, Wookey revealed her identity in

an open letter describing her role in the event in more detail, as well as the reasons that led to her decision to decline to collaborate: “I refused to participate as a performer because what I anticipated would be a few hours of creative labour, a

meal, and the chance to network with like-minded colleagues turned out to be an unfairly remunerated job. I was expected to lie naked and speechless on a slowly rotating table, starting from before the guests arrived and lasting until after they left (a

total of nearly four hours). I was expected to ignore (by staying in what Abramović refers to as ‘performance mode’) any potential physical or verbal harassment while performing. I was expected to commit to fifteen hours of rehearsal time, and sign

a Non-Disclosure Agreement stating that if I spoke to anyone about what happened in the audition I was liable for being sued by Bounce Events, Marketing, Inc., the event's producer, for a sum of \$1 million dollars plus attorney fees. I was to be paid

\$150.”⁴⁹

Wookey’s letter describes some of the expected tasks of the performers; some were to sit under the round dinner tables on small revolving chairs, with their heads peeking out of openings on the table, and turn among the cutlery, food and

plates. They were to do that for three hours and strive to make eye contact with the guests seated at the table. At the audition, there was no mention of any protection for the performers nor any possible assistance to those who may have found themselves in

trouble performing this live and certainly strenuous work.

The reaction of Marina Abramović and the organizers to the letter was huge and rather hurt. Abramović accused Rainer of being unfamiliar with the full context of the event, writing a letter of

protest without
experiencing the event,
and putting herself
demagogically on the
side of the performers;
many of them
supposedly enjoyed the
event and did not have
any problems with the
collaboration
conditions. In a
discussion with

Harvard University
students (Graduate
School of Design),
Abramović stated in a
rather distressed
manner that it had
been highly unjust of
Rainer to accuse her of
exploitation as a
daughter of a partisan
and Yugoslav general,
someone characterized

by a strong communist background. Abramović also attacked Rainer for her supposed narrow-mindedness in terms of failing to see the critical or ironical stance of the event toward the donors. At the hall entrance, the guests had to put on white laboratory coats,

covering up their shiny expensive clothes; they were also in an ambivalent situation due to their live contact with the performers. Their social and financial position was supposed to be rendered ironic through the role they played in the event.⁵⁰ Indeed, the

footage of the event looks like that of a bizarrely aestheticised feast, a laboratory excess almost, where the blowout of the rich intertwines with the sweet cakes/corpses and living heads on the tables. For this reason, Rainer compares this event to *Salo* (1976), a

controversial film by Pasolini, dealing with sadism and the sexual abuse of a group of adolescents by post-war Fascists; she makes this comparison with severe reservations however: “Reluctant as I am to dignify Abramović by mentioning Pasolini in the same breath, the

latter at least had a socially credible justification tied to the cause of anti-fascism.”⁵¹

A *New York Times* reporter described Abramović’s event at the Moca (Museum of Contemporary Art) as an ‘epic gala evening’. More epic than the

evening itself is the
battle of two twentieth
century experimental
art icons. It reveals
some essential traits of
the closeness of art and
capitalism, which also
underlies the new
culturally and
politically complex
situation of
contemporary

performance art.
Today, there are
differences present in
the work of
performance artists,
with their bodies and
enduring subjectivity at
its very core. This
brings us back to the
previous chapter and
the interesting status of
the performer's work,

which can be closely associated with the changes of work in contemporary capitalism. This battle is therefore not a syndicalist one (i.e. pertaining to an adequate remuneration for the work in question), but it would also be too narrow to

understand it as a
moralist discussion on
the appropriation of life
and radical art by
spectacular and
globally-oriented
artistic institutions
(which is generally too
frequent a target of
critiques nowadays).
We must delve further
than the moralistic

discussion on
exploitation – in terms
of who exploits the
body in a more efficient
manner: dancers (as
Rainer was later
reproached by
Abramović) or
performers, who offer
their quiet, enduring
subjectivity to create
the atmosphere of the

event?

There are quite a few problems at the core of this dispute that shatter the political power of performance art and indicate the capitalization of the artistic powers in contemporary culture. We can also connect this discussion with a

now historical dilemma
of avant-garde art,
triggered by Yvonne
Rainer's famous
manifesto *No to
spectacle* (1962); which
influenced an entire
generation of
minimalist artists,
especially in the US.

There is an
interesting *déjà vu* to

this dispute and it needs to be understood as a repetition of the difference of the same. With its consumption of the body, energy, human actions and presence, as well as with its encouragement of intersubjective exchange between the performance artist and

performers,
performance art has
become a place of
experimenting with
subjectivity and life or
their consumption
through numerous
political, sexual,
discursive and cultural
inscriptions. In the
1970s, performance art
entered the centre of

political and critical art. Live art challenged the institutional frames of art and exhibition, raising numerous questions on the representation of the body and gender, as well as the ideological and discursive constellations of the body. But how are we

to view such artistic practices today, when subjectivity is at the core of human production (Lazzarato) and capital powers deeply affect the powers and potentialities of life?

The establishment of performance modes (Abramović) or

atmospheres, affects,
persistences, presences,
intensities and tensions,
can be thought of as
performing human and
subjective powers:
these powers are at the
centre of contemporary
post-Fordist
production. It must not
be overlooked that such
artistic practices take

place at a time when
human sociality is at
the core of production
and when our
cognitive, affective and
flexible abilities are
part of the production
of value; they are
something that fuels
contemporary
capitalism. In view of
the radical

consumption of
subjectivity, we can no
longer avoid the issue
of the labour performed
by the (performance)
artist in various
contexts; his/her power
or readiness to be
‘present’ is not just an
immaterial aesthetic
state, but is firmly
connected to new

manners of production and exploitation. Bodily or eventful states, atmospheres and intensities cannot be thought about without their social and political contexts; they do not exist as isolated art material because they are already deeply intertwined with

numerous social and economic processes. The problem is therefore that in today's capitalism, we work in the manner that Abramović calls performance mode. One's work is intertwined with the performing and maintenance of

creativity; in this, one should ignore every disturbance from the environment or political context, as well as any antagonist disturbance that comes from the sphere of the public.⁵² We work with our language, imagination and creative abilities, but

not in a manner that would lead to changes in the public sphere. The work in performance mode is therefore strongly depoliticized; our powers are separated from their practical and social contexts. Exploitation is therefore not only

connected to the
problematizing of the
amount of payment for
the work itself in the
sense that the
exploitation would
have ceased if the
performers had been
sufficiently
remunerated. It is
primarily connected
with the fact that

Abramović's proposal exploits the very presence of the performers, their affective, direct and live persistence/endurance, in which the endurance of the bodies does not produce any public (political) effect, except contributing to the

spectacular value of the
artist and the
institution she is
supported by. At the
centre of this work is
their strain, a strain
without a voice – their
pure presence, robbed
of any context. The
performers are there as
subjects without voices
and clothing, or, as

stated by Sarah Wookey in the letter she published a few days after Rainer's: "I would rather be the face of the outspoken artist than the silenced, slowly rotating head (or, worse, 'centre piece') at the table. I want a voice, loud and clear. Abramović's call

for artists was, as the LA Times quoted, for ‘strong, silent types.’ I am certainly strong but I am not comfortable with silence in this situation. I refuse to be a silent artist regarding issues that affect my livelihood and the culture of my practice.”⁵³

The essential difference could lie in the fact that the beginnings of performance art in the second half of the twentieth century constituted a demand; the consumption of subjectivity was a way for the performance artist to demand their

voice – a political and embodied voice –, and brought about an exchange with the sexual, social and political voices of the artists and disembodied institutional power. This is why the greatest part of the artists' work was not delegated; their lives and presence

were not to serve celebrities – in other words, it was not work for someone else, as for example is the case of the spectacular reconstructions of performance art pieces in recent years.

This loss of voice is also quite close to the contemporary ways of

working; those can also be revolutionary works without a political voice, with art and contemporary creative work closely resembling each other in this aspect.⁵⁴ This loss of voice also underlies the problematic loss of the critical and political

power of performance
art; this loss is not a
consequence of
appropriation by
institutions that are
supposed to make
spectacles out of
performance art pieces,
but of a basic shift in
the power and force of
subjectivity. Today,
subjectivity mostly

comes across as
produced, with
subjectivity
experimentation
desired in the core of
the contemporary
capitalist spectacle.⁵⁵ It
is in this sense that
Rainer's reply entails
the repetition of the
same as the repetition
of difference. Today,

the repeated No to
spectacle! can be read
as a repeated No to
spectacle! in art, a
spectacle excessively
ubiquitous in the
artistic institutions of
the contemporary
world, which are
related closely to
capitalism. It speaks
about the

powerlessness of the profanation procedures in contemporary culture (as already discussed in the previous chapter).

In her Harvard University discussion, Abramović talks about Rainer not recognising the critical point of her work, which was a

cynical stance towards
the donors who showed
up to attend the
exclusive expensive
gala dinner that
evening. Abramović's
fellow
conversationalist, the
art critic Sanford
Kwinter agreed too,
saying that Rainer's
reaction reminded him

of a similar scandal in 1974, when the *Artforum* newspaper published a photograph of Lynda Benglis on its front page. The artist was featured naked, with sunglasses and a large latex dildo. The photograph, which was actually an advertisement for

Benglis's exhibition at the Paula Cooper Gallery, gave rise to numerous indignant reactions, including on the editorial board of the newspaper itself; in the next issue, Rosalind Krauss and other editorial board members described the cover as exploitive and

brutal. Many other artists also recognised it as a gesture of the appropriation and commercialisation of art. A response to that was the founding of the still influential *October* magazine, founded in 1976 by two former members of the *Artforum* editorial

board, Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson. In his conversation with Abramović, Kwinter stated that Rainer's reaction was reminiscent of puritan America – the puritanism and moralism deeply present in American avant-garde practices.

In Kwinter's opinion, the reaction was connected to a puritanism that patronizingly condemns the pleasure and excess of art as well as their entry into the mainstream, taking away the critical point. Kwinter therefore considers Rainer's letter

as a repetition of this 1970s event, as a puritanical reaction to the entry of radical and experimental art into mainstream culture. This repetition series can also be interpreted differently; it could be connected with a series of political differences placed by avant-garde

art throughout the twentieth century into a kind of genealogy, which I will attempt to briefly sum up at this point.

In her 1962 manifesto, Rainer reacts to the excess and commodification of art, to the seduction of the spectator, offering the

minimalism of art as a response. In the mid-1970s, the *October* magazine reacts to this commodification with an empty cover, opening the magazine to post-modernism, which only later starts to be reflected on in connection with post-Fordist manners of

production and neoliberal cultural dynamics as well. In 2011, Rainer and like-minded individuals react to the exploitation of artistic work; after the end of the first decade of the twenty first century, this exploitation is at the core of producing

spectacular value of the performance presence. Rainer thus discloses the closeness of art and capitalism. At the end of this chapter, this strategically created genealogy can yield at least two interesting conclusions.

The first is connected to the puritanism of the

avant-garde; rather than moralising, it should actually be read as a demand for a reduction of artistic gestures and means. It testifies to the fact that all these repetitions can be read as demands for art that can be placed close to the contexts of the Russian historical

avant-garde, discussed
by Boris Groys.
Nowadays, the avant-
garde is frequently
denoted as powerless,
as the provocation of
art is generated in close
connection with
capitalism, which
places a further added
value upon such
procedures; for this

reason, avant-garde art is supposed to be heavily commodified. Groys points out that it is not provocation, criticism, cynicism or striving for excess that is at the centre of the avant-garde; quite the opposite; avant-gardes are actually very ascetic practices, with

the radical reduction
and negation of
procedures at their
core.⁵⁶ It would be
good to think about
how the radical
negation of procedures
and artistic gestures
can influence the
creation of art today
and reveal the power of
art in terms of thinking

the unthinkable,
referring to the non-
existent activity outside
capitalised time. Such
an interpretation helps
us think of reduction
separately from
moralism and
puritanism (where any
kind of reduction and
demand for 'less' is
made by the

contemporary culture of pleasure). It helps us connect artistic gesture with consistency, the procedures of profanation and the persistence of artistic life that does not drown in the excess of the real or in everything that art needs to address (especially if it aims to

be political).

There is also a second conclusion that can be drawn from this genealogy of repetitions. The repetition in the dispute between Rainer and Abramović points out a trait of contemporary culture, a strange

intertwinement
between contemporary
commodification and
pleasure (enjoyment),
which cannot take
place in any other way
than on demand. As
mentioned above, the
critical point of the
radical consumption of
the body gets lost in
the age of the endless

consumption of the body and energies, with the aim of producing even more. The critical point of this event is isolated; as stated in Rainer's letter, Abramović does not actually have an addressee or an aim (contrary to Pasolini) to direct herself at; the

aim is therefore only a further establishment of the market value of the artist herself – that of the speculative expectation invested upfront in her position as an artist. Such an event is created within the existing system of art, which creates networks between

excessively rich
individuals and star
artists, between rich
investors and artistic
works, between
spectacular events and
politically oriented
curators. In this system,
charitable people have
a similar status as
within the wider
context of capitalism.

Their position is analysed by Slavoj Žižek in his book *Violence*; in the chapter The Good Men from Porto Davos. He states that charity actually neutralises the chase for profit: “Charity is the humanitarian mask hiding the face of economic

exploitation.”⁵⁷ In this sense, the “sovereign self-negating gesture of the endless acquisition of wealth is to spend this wealth for things beyond price, and outside market circulation: public goods, art and sciences, health, etc.”⁵⁸ According to Žižek, this

is a way for the capitalists' life to acquire purpose; it is no longer just about widespread reproduction that is self-serving. In this way, the capitalist acquires public recognition; it is not only about satisfaction on the personal level;

charity is “the logical concluding point of capitalistic circulation, necessary from the strictly economic standpoint, since it allows the capitalist system to postpone its crisis. It re-establishes balance – a kind of redistribution of wealth to the truly needy”.⁵⁹

But what happens with capitalists who donate their wealth to art and receive tickets to the performance art pieces of the rich, in which they not only participate, but are also critically addressed? Their pleasure lies in the critical attitude towards them; it is in

the co-existence of their status as the rich and a parodic critique of their role. This reflects the fact that the art of today is no longer capable of ridiculing its patrons because this is precisely what they expect from it; this is part of the excess value of their gift – the

critical self-awareness and making fun of their own selves in front of everyone's eyes. Their pleasure must be provocative, ill-at-ease and unusual. Such charitable donors are sitting ducks for provocative actions directed at them; their status is that of the

publicly admitted
uneasiness that they
constantly express by
making donations to
various institutions
while making even
more money
themselves; these
patrons are well aware
that art will reveal this
uneasiness without
consequences. In this

sense, capitalism and art meet at the point where art is isolated from any kind of symbolic power and participates in the flood of the real, obscene pleasure of those who financially support it. The fact that the guests need to ascetically cover up their clothes

at the gala dinner just confirms that the asceticism of today is at work at the core of the greatest pleasure; at the centre of the most intense consumerism, there is control and discipline, the order to 'enjoy yourself!'.

The absence of the symbolic in the flood of

real pleasure is also pointed out in Lacan's lecture that predicts the beginning of a new contemporary power: "The regime puts you on display; it says 'Watch them fuck'..."⁶⁰ His statement predicts the emergence of power based on the imperative of pleasure,

gobbling up all rebellious and profane activities by means of new forms of subtle control and self-regulation. Lacan makes this statement in the scope of the lecture at the University of Vincennes in Paris, at the peak of the student and sexual revolution

(1969) when the body, pleasure and the body's desires become the key fields of rebellion. "We see very rarely, this needs to be said, that someone dies of shame,"⁶¹ Lacan says at the beginning of the lecture, one taking place at the height of elation, at the rise of

relaxed and liberated
post-industrial culture.
He namely detects an
interesting trait of this
new culture of the
liberated body, relaxed
atmosphere, the new
culture of consumerism
and pleasure – in short,
the culture of the
liberated subject: this
culture attempts to

make shame disperse
and vanish. This is why
Lacan says to the
students at the end of
his lecture that a good
reason, if any, for the
lecture being so
crowded should be
sought in the fact that
he arouses shame in
them every now and
then.

This syntagm should not be understood as a complaint by a conservative professor who classifies the current tumultuous goings-on in society as obscure and reacts to them in an aristocratic manner. The matter at hand is a lot more fundamental; this

‘reservation’, ‘nobility’, discretion (as termed by Žižek⁶²) or ‘honour’ (as discussed by J. A. Miller) is actually in a radical dialogue with culture; insofar as culture abolishes shame, this is due to a radical change in the governing discourse. “Today, we are namely

in a period when the ruling discourse forbids us to be ashamed of our pleasure any longer. Of everything else yes. Of our desire, but not of our pleasure.”⁶³

Furthermore, shame is a performative process, an interesting affect that “effaces itself; shame points and

projects; shame turns
itself skin side out;
shame and pride,
shame and dignity,
shame and self-display,
shame and
exhibitionism are
different interlinings of
the same glove.”⁶⁴ Or,
as stated by Alenka
Zupančič: “Shame is
the affect of the fact

that we have not died of shame in a certain situation. This inner doubling of shame is the key point for the understanding of its essential dimension. In the not-to-die-of-shame situation, the subject is forced to see the downfall of his or her own signifier, the

downfall of his or her own symbolic dimension. Although I am ashamed, I do not die along with my symbolic role.”⁶⁵ If we apply this to the imperative of contemporary shameless culture, we can again see that the absence of shame exists

due to the suppression
of this symbolic
dimension: nothing can
be profaned any longer
because everything has
already been profaned.

For this reason, the
letter by Sarah Wookey
and Yvonne Rainer
should also be
understood as a
repetition of the

rebellion against the particular social role of art, as a demand for the voice of the artistic precariat, a demand for work performed by subjectivity and the body to be valued fairly. In this case, art does not yield to the existing state, but understands the

consumption of
subjectivity especially
in terms of addressing
its symbolic role in
contemporary society,
which is increasingly
veiled by the reality of
its work. It points out
the public character of
the artistic action and
the ways in which any
kind of work (no

matter how quiet) is part of the constellations of power, the placement of social hierarchies and the demand for visibility in the public sphere. It also points out that there is a profound need in today's art to revalue artistic work and simultaneously

preserve the power of
the artistic procedures
of profanation and
experimenting as
separate from the
profane pleasures of the
elite.

Chapter 3

The Production of Sociality

3.1. The Glut of Sociality

In 2011, on the horizon of the political changes which populist measures were to

intervene quite brutally into regarding the role of art, education and culture in Dutch society, the Chto delat? group created one of its films, *Songspiel: The Netherlands 20XX*⁶⁶ at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. The film is a continuation of a series of similar works

created by the Chto
delat? in recent years
and named *Songspiel*⁶⁷,
with a clear reference
to the works of Bertolt
Brecht and Kurt Weill.
The films feature
dialogues set to music
and refer to concrete
social and political
themes. For example, in
the format of a short

ancient tragedy,
Perestroika Songspiel
(2008) deals with the
political hopes and
visions of the future of
those involved in the
democratic changes
before Gorbachev⁶⁸.
Tower Songspiel (2010)
employs the
architectural layouts of
the Okhta Centre and

the Gazprom Tower in St. Petersburg; its libretto again uses texts from true events and sets them to music. The result is a play on current Russian political and social life.

In 2011, Chto delat? made another film, *The Netherlands 20XX*, at the invitation of the

Van Abbemuseum
curator, Charles Esche.
In the film, we listen to
and watch a sung
drama about illegal
refugees who find
shelter in a museum in
an indeterminate but
hardly incredible future
when the state is
governed by strict laws
about migrant

deportation. The
dramatic musical
dialogues unfold
between the museum
guards (the
representatives of the
people), the museum
director, the journalists,
the authorities, an
artist and the refugees,
touching upon the
problematic situation of

a refugee family whose presence could endanger the artistic institution. In the film, an artist exhibiting at the museum proposes to give refuge to the family of migrants, by using its members in the reconstruction of the avant-garde opera *Victory over the Sun*⁶⁹.

The second half of the film indeed features the refugee family performing amongst cubist objects; the film ends after the successful presentation of the reconstruction, with a sung dialogue between the museum director and a female co-worker. They

express their
satisfaction with the
performance, which
once again showed the
museum's political
engagement, and walk
proudly through the
collection of political
and visionary works of
the historical avant-
garde that the museum
is famous for. Although

the performance again confirms the museum's revolutionary spirit to the satisfaction of both, the refugees are arrested on the following day, which, according to the director, "actually concerns us no longer."

The plot unfolds through sung dialogues,

which has an especially strong effect; its elevated choral note shows that the tragic, heroic and unbridgeable antagonistic relationships actually take place in our daily lives. The tragic story has a profane ending; this testifies to the fact

that political and ethical issues are all too often drowned in the cynical ‘realism’ of contemporaneity or in what Chantal Mouffe terms *the moral register of the political*.⁷⁰ Art frequently functions within a moral checklist; its works are addressed to all kinds

of political problems,
warning, educating and
pricking with moral
feelings of guilt and
sympathy; however,
they cannot bear the
weight of the
antagonisms that are at
the core of art and also
profoundly concern the
institutions within
which artworks achieve

visibility and
'permanence'. *Songspiel*
is thus a deliberately
selected form of
narration, bringing into
the open especially the
universal powerlessness
of both political and
ethical activity in art
and posing the question
of rethinking and
conceiving of a

different future. It shows that art, even if intensely thought of as a field of possible changes, actually does not possess such political power; in order to preserve its autonomous position of changing and conceiving of the future, it actually

remains in the safe
haven of the
'progressive'
institution.

Interestingly, all the
works in the *Songspiel*
film series deal with
the future; the part
referring to the Dutch
situation predicts a
new, menacing future
lurking on the horizon,

one far from the political and democratic hopes of the earlier films. In other words, contemporary art is marked by the inability to think of the antagonisms present deeply in its own core; rather than participating actively in changing common life,

it rather continuously
recognises the
symptoms of its own
disintegration.

I wish to use this
example to enable an
insight into the
production of sociality
in art; over the last two
decades, this
production has become
so intensive that we

can actually talk about
social abundance.
These shifts come in a
variety of forms and
are mostly visible in
the expansion of
participatory art or
communal artistic
processes. To put it
another way: in the
previous chapter, I
focused on the body

and subjectivity; in this one, I am going to deal with the intensities and articulations of plurality – with the place of numerous bodies and voices in contemporary art. I am going to discuss them in connection with the social processes of contemporary

capitalism. My aim is to show that the production of sociality signals that art is actually closely intertwined with the processes of the disappearance of the sociality and political articulations of the public. The contemporary political

pressures of increasing populism in Europe, the rightist attacks upon art and culture, and the neoliberal revaluations of human creativity and potentialities seem to have sharpened these questions even further. They are connected with the entry of sociality into

production or with the exploitation of sociality and human relationships for the generation of market value, which profoundly shatters the public space as a space of antagonistic thinking or a space of the distribution of the sensual (Rancière)⁷¹.

This places into question the emancipatory role of art, which was often at the forefront as a demand in the art of the twentieth century.

3.2. Relational delusions

At the end of the

1990s, the discussions on the political were heavily influenced by *Relational Aesthetics*, a book by Nicolas Bourriaud detecting the production of sociality in contemporary art and describing aesthetic phenomena, especially in the visual art of the 1990s. It is

important to note that the text is a curatorial intervention, nevertheless it does flirt with theoretical argumentation to a sufficient extent that the book was well received immediately after publication and also frequently served as a theoretical

foundation for
reflections on new
forms of communal
articulations in art, the
activities of the
spectator and the
autonomous
fragmentary nature of
the spectator's
perception.⁷² Social
change and
collaboration, social

relationships and articulations are at the core of ‘relational aesthetics’, the notion that has influenced numerous participatory and collaborative artistic projects of the last decade. This work describes artistic institutions as spaces of social relations or

numerous non-material
processes that, as a
flow of feelings,
communications and
perceptions, shape the
new reality of the
artistic market.
Relational aesthetics
deals with the
processes of transition,
participation,
collaboration and

contracts, in which artistic works are not only considered as social events (since they always take place in relation to the spectator), but also as independent formers of sociality by means of researching and establishing relationships (personal,

political, economic, sensual, intimate etc.). Collaboration is closely connected to social change and the critical use of adaptable work processes that govern daily life. “The possibility of a *relational* art (an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of

human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space), points to a radical upheaval of the aesthetic, cultural and political goals introduced by modern art.”⁷³ At this point, I would like to analyse

Bourriaud's approach, especially because he connects relational aesthetics with the political project; in other words, he ascribes political orientation to artistic work due to the social relations contained in the definition. The question that merits

special attention is the following: what does Bourriaud actually talk about when discussing the political project – what kind of politics does the political in art refer to?

In her critical approach to Bourriaud's work, Claire Bishop points out

the problematic dimension of relational works, which should be open to interaction, inviting to the collaboration and dynamic involvements of those participating. According to Bishop, the problem is that the relations established in this kind of openness

are never established in connection with questions on how these works are involved in sociality, what kind of communities are actually formed through them and what kind of social reality these communities have.⁷⁴ Bourriaud's book thus entails a

defence of art, whose non-material processes could be close to the artistic articulations of the 1960s, in the sense that they would not just reflect relations and connections but produce them. In this sense, artistic work would be political due to the active inclusion

of the spectator and
leaving the passive
ocular observation of
the artistic work that
de-objectivises the
work and
dematerialises its
processes. In this,
Bishop warns of an
interesting trait of the
second half of the
twentieth century;

according to her, every work referring to participation already contains this rhetorical idea on emancipation as if activity itself were *a priori* connected to the political articulations of the democratic and the equality of subjects.⁷⁵ The question is how to

evaluate and compare the quality of these relations, in which ‘relational aesthetics’ is never placed into question.

“When Bourriaud argues that ‘encounters are more important than the individuals who compose them,’ I sense that this question

is (for him)
unnecessary; all
relations that permit
'dialogue' are
automatically assumed
to be democratic and
therefore good. But
what does 'democracy'
really mean in this
context? If relational
art produces human
relations, then the next

logical question to ask is what types of relations are being produced, for whom, and why?"⁷⁶ According to Bishop, this kind of connection of relational art with the political project enables the direct correlation of aesthetic judgement with the ethical

political judgement that is at work today in speech on the political character of art.⁷⁷ In this equality, the conclusion is somewhat like this: if relations are at the core of new forms of art, then this means that relational work (with all its traits such as the

dematerialisation of the artwork as an object, instability, fragmentariness, openness, processuality, communal manners of articulation), are also political in the sense that they challenge traditional ways of understanding art and

also change its perception. In other words: every communal form of collaboration is already supposed to be political and connected with ethical issues of being together, referring, establishing communal atmospheres, sharing, exchange etc.

If we follow Bourriaud, this is the reason why the ethical-political moment is no longer articulated through the traditional manner of utopian agendas, but in an active and involved manner here and now. It has active power in the sense that the life

of those involved as art is supposed to offer many pragmatic and concrete suggestions of social change and community formation, which are also closely connected to artistic proposals. According to Bourriaud, we can talk about the microutopias of the present in

connection with these works: the world does not change, but the active participants learn how to settle the world better; it is therefore about changing through direct social and communal collaboration, through play as well as the

relations and protocols that the participants establish between each other – with work, the artist and, last but not least, the artistic institution.⁷⁸ But the question is whether this shifting of attention to social relations already constitutes political change or whether it

actually intervenes into the communal ways of being together and the sociality of people. Numerous artworks that belong under the notion of relational aesthetics become works though the plurality of relations, i.e. through the changing multiplicity of

numerous ways to be
and be active (albeit
temporarily) together.
It is true that a more or
less dynamic
interaction can take
place between
subjectivities, but such
an interaction never
concerns involvement
in opposing social
relations; it never really

questions the relations under which they are generated. Quite the opposite, such projects fuse with existing social relations and establish them as the only possible form. After all, this is also discussed by Bourriaud himself, who states that relational aesthetics reflects the

shift from the production of goods (objects) to a service economy. It fuses with the shifts in late capitalism.

Relationships are therefore a network of actions that bring the spectators, artists and curators closer together through the processes

of the dematerialisation of objects themselves, but do not change the processes of spatialisation. They do not rearticulate either the space of the institution in which their meetings take place or the roles of those participating in the exchange of the

relations in these meetings. The sociality created in this manner is therefore already framed and presupposed as the sociality of transparent artistic space, which, in a good neo-liberal manner, always verifies and improves the ways in which we refer to

each other as social subjects, constantly offering new games for our subjectivities and producing political procedures of negotiation, agreement or disagreement, but actually with no real effect upon the antagonist space of the public.

Relational art should also not be equated with political projects because, in this case, spaces of art indeed become spaces of sociality, but this does not mean that we are already talking about public spaces. At this point, we can aid ourselves with Henri

Lefebvre's
understanding of space.
Lefebvre develops the
concept of active
spatialisation, replacing
the static
understanding of space,
and thus shows the
importance of the role
of space in the
understanding of
relationships and their

“politicalness”.⁷⁹ Space is not defined by the activity it is intended for (e.g. the tennis court, where tennis is played), or by the names of buildings and other firm identities. Space is always formed by means of active processes of spatialisation that

result from the activities, physical traits and structures of subjectivities with their social relations, fears, desires etc. In this sense, contemporary artistic institutions (e.g. the museum or the gallery) are also no longer defined merely by the fact that they

exhibit artworks, but are formed by the activities and relations of the social subjectivities that they are more or less temporarily settled by; contemporary institutions are open and transparent structures. However, these spaces are still

those of separation and delimitation; actually, they are a lot closer to the negotiating and protocol spaces of contemporary democratic processes. Are not contemporary galleries and museums, as relational and communal scenes, similar to what takes

place in the
antechambre, a famous
case of Lefevbre?
Historically, the
antechambre denoted
the space for
negotiations between
the king and his
petitioners, where the
petitioners acquired
more power because
they met the king

personally, with the monarch's power reduced by a degree for a moment because common subjects were close to him. It is therefore the most relational of all spaces; the mere act of entry into it changes the social position of the individuals, with them

settling the space in a better way. Relational space is created because of the intertwinement of the relationship between space and subjectivity.

Lefebvre namely shows that the space of negotiations is not relational by itself, but can only take on this

role when it is strictly
physically codified as
static and
unchangeable. The
most open and
transparent democratic
activity – that of
institutional sociality –
requires a strictly
codified and
unchangeable space.
Negotiations can

therefore only take place in a stable space that determines the procedure of the common in advance. A stable space still needs to exist in order to enable instability, the flow of dissent, the constant changing of roles and common activity. This is why it

is not unusual that spaces for negotiation, collaboration and political discussion still remain among the most monumental and ‘unchangeable’ (parliaments, corporate buildings), and have also been joined by art spaces in recent decades.

The first conclusion to draw on this basis is that the institutions of art that open their doors to relational art have not really changed much, but have been entered by new atmospheres and tensions that constantly create the illusion of activity, co-decision

and influence, which is closely connected to the pseudoactivity of the contemporary subject. Such pseudoactivity is connected with a constant flow of opinions and activities, as well as the forming of communities, but in such a way that the

constant flow of
relations is never
threatened by
incontrollable or
unpredictable social
dissent because these
activities still take
place in stable
institutions with
meticulously structured
spaces. The second
conclusion is that

spaces of art have become spaces of sociality, negotiation and the seeming arrangement of social relations because such activity has actually disappeared from public space. On the one hand, artistic institutions take on the new role of the political

space of negotiation
and community
creation, but frequently
only in the sense that
the stability of their
spaces (closely
connected to the
capitalist economy and
the production of
value) minimizes or
eradicates dissension
(as is e.g. clear from

the work *Songspiel: The Netherlands 20XX*). An important part of these changes is the illusion of the social transparency of artistic spaces that constantly invite collaboration, multiple goings-on in various spaces, discussions, eating and temporary lodging in

these spaces. New spaces of art must be entirely and constantly visible – they must create the possibility of participation and free activity. Lefebvre warns about this illusion of transparency. The space seems bright and clear, offering a free hand for activity; this is

an illusion of a neutral and innocent space without traps. It is therefore important to conclude that here, it is not so much about the critique of relational art as such, but especially about a critical approach to its direct connection with the political. This

connection only seems political because it entails and works with social relations. Today, these social relations are at the core of generating value, with manners of production connected to the exploitation of these relations. At the same time, the

dematerialisation of objects and the fetishisation of open procedures and transparent relations are at the core of post-Fordist shifts in the understanding of work and production.

3.3. The Working

Spectator

The production of sociality can also be analysed from another perspective – through the participation and active role of the audience at contemporary artistic events. Today, it is not just the artist who is

social; the
contemporary spectator
needs to be as well.
This mostly concerns
events that take place
at museums and other
artistic institutions in
large numbers; many of
them are also located
in-between the
performing arts,
performance art and

visual practices. Due to the similarity of the production by means of human potentiality and energies, as well as due to the similar intensities, atmospheres and tensions between capitalist consumption and the consumption of art, I would like to point out a particular

aspect of these events that can also be interpreted from the perspective of post-Fordism and modes of production of subjectivity. This chapter therefore focuses on the reflection on the participation and 'activation' of the

audience at artistic events and the various performative actions that have been multiplying with great speed at art galleries and museum exhibitions in recent years. Events seem to be flourishing in the field of visual arts, hand in hand with the

changing role of the audience. In various ways, the audience experiences the shift from passive observing or contemplation to activation and participation.

I would like to approach this discussion from quite a specific viewpoint and

focus on the effort invested by the audience when it forms a constituent part of the artistic event. I would like to show that the ‘effort’ of the audience becomes an essential part of the contemporary artistic event. As shown by Rancière in his essay on

the emancipated
spectator, every
audience is active;
there is no difference in
quality between
“passive
contemplation” and
“active participation”.⁸⁰
There are differences,
however, in terms of
the ways in which the
event is constituted by

the cognitive, energetic, physical, or emphatic strains of the audience. One of the main characteristics of contemporary artistic events is the central role of the 'effort' of the audience, which can also be connected to more general modes of contemporary work,

especially with the ways in which the production of subjectivity is at the core of the economic production of today, as discussed in the first chapter.

In 2009, I was present at an artistic event that could serve as a nice introductory

example for this chapter. For the closing party of the *In-Transit* festival in Berlin, the *artist* invited about a hundred people from the street to join her, promising them free food and drink under the condition that they started to dance and entertain themselves

immediately, as well as actively inviting all the other participants to join in the party. It was the fastest outburst of dance I had ever seen at any party, although things did seem a little phony. The event was not actually constituted by the people hired to dance; the gist was not

in them revealing the performativity of such social occasion. It was a lot more interesting to observe how fast the hired dancers actually succeeded in evoking similar social behaviour in the other party attendees. As a result, lots of people almost immediately yielded to

the common joy and rhythm and immersed themselves in dancing until the late morning hours. What actually transformed this dance into an event was the social and affective work of the audience, its surrender, joy, going with the flow, its flirting with the rhythm

and with other dancers,
and its participation.
The event was
triggered by the change
the audience created
with its effort and
investment. The event
did not arise from the
fact that this dance was
provoked, activated
and performed by
'temporary actors', but

from the fact that it
was shared,
communicated,
exchanged and danced
together – that it gave
rise to temporary
alliances and energy
flows in terms of joyful
investment or active
repulsion (depending
on the decision to go or
not to go with the

flow). In this sense, it is the audience that is placed at the forefront in the contemporary event. In other words, the work is performed by an active audience; without audience participation, it would not be completed.

For this reason, it is sensible to think about

that what it is that lies
at core of the
contemporary event; it
is the social, affective
and linguistic effort of
the audience. I'm using
the word effort
intentionally because I
would not only like to
discuss a specific kind
of effort, but also the
exchange of power that

opens the door for the audience into a temporary public space; its effort produces the added value of the event. At the same time, the audience works with its social, cognitive and emotional skills, i.e. skills central to contemporary forms of

post-Fordist
production. There is an
exchange of work
between the audience
and the museum (or
any other cultural
institution where
artistic events are
performed); by means
of its effort (affection,
communication,
emotions, desires,

efforts connected with dispersion, organization, collaboration, isolation, etc.), the audience performs the work and performs the public of the contemporary museum. In turn, the museum enables and produces a platform for the public by means of

letting the audience to do their work. In this sense, the artist stands somewhere in-between as a researcher of society and a cognitive experimenter, with the artist's work increasingly curated by the artistic institution so that it can belong to 'a specific public'.

If we claim that the audience's role in contemporary artistic events is actually in the effort, that there is a visible strain to a lesser or greater degree invested in the event, we need to ask ourselves whether it is also about a new form of exploitation. This

question especially
becomes intriguing
because the audience of
contemporary artistic
institutions is no longer
organized through the
dispositif of watching
(the passive
observation of
individuals); at the
same time, it is also not
recognizable as just an

organized community
of people or as a
representational
totality of a recognised
identity. The audience
of the contemporary
artistic institution is
embodied and shaped
through endless
rearranging,
renumbering and
various assemblages

that can appear and disappear together with the negotiations, paths created or decisions taken by the audience at the exhibition. Contemporary artistic institutions soon seem like spaces where social experience is dispersed, incalculable and non-representative. The

audience seems like a
disorganized sum of
fleeting and
impermanent gestures,
alliances, attractions,
repulsions, agreements
and disagreements – a
sort of sum of fleeting
glimpses of works and
fragmentary thoughts.
The contemporary
museum does not

organize the gaze, but rather disperses its effect. This is also why the contemporary exhibition often functions as a cacophonous space with a lot of delegation, interpassivity and going with the flow (which, incidentally, is also connected with

exhaustion).

Quite frequently, the role of the contemporary artistic event is that of capturing the life force of such a multitude and performing it as 'the public', in the fact that the audience provides the event with a political, social and

affective dimension. In this event, the indecisive multitude and its diffused effort transform into a public (social or even political) force. This is also why most artistic events, even the most immaterial ones (e.g. works by Tino Sehgal), actually do have a firm

basis; events are namely based on the materiality of the effort and human force. At the core of the aesthetic arrangement of events, there is always human potentiality – that of the human gesture or the experience of life. Such an experience of life is truly social; even

if it is diffused, fleeting
or uncertain, it comes
across as the
performative nature of
the variety of social
gestures enabled by the
artist's offer and carried
out by the audience in
the museum space.
These experiences can
of course differ as to
the quantity of effort

invested; they can be more or less powerful, more or less present, sometimes nearly unnoticeable and subtle, and at other times violent and deviant. Nevertheless, their exhibition value is always the same: they are at the core of the event and constitute

the museum public.

In her introduction to the 29th Biennial of Graphic Arts catalogue, Beti Žerovc stresses the fact that numerous museums of today not only distribute and curate such events, but also take on the role of their producers and organizers.⁸¹ I would

like to add in this context, that, by doing so, the museums and other artistic institutions do not replace the traditional forms of sponsorship and commissioning of artistic works, but actually transform them into new production forces.

Everything they touch
they transform, not
only into culture, but
also into the
appearance of the
social. Everything
produced at the
museum seems 'public'
by itself; the museum
thus offers a
performative shield for
testing various social,

affective and cognitive potentials of contemporary life.

According to Hito Steyerl, the contemporary museum “corresponds to the dispersed space of a social factory.”⁸² The museum is still a space for production, a space for exploitation; in the

“museum as a factory”
things are still
produced. What
continues to be
produced are the forms
of the social, created by
means of an affective
and communicative
effort of the audience –
by means of its senses,
bodies and cognitive
abilities, or, as Steyerl

writes, the “aesthetic faculties and imaginary practices of its viewers”.⁸³ At these new factories, exploitation continues to take place; it is present in the ways in which museums are productively organized: “as flagship stores of Cultural Industries,

staffed by eager interns who work for free.”⁸⁴ But this productive-oriented organization is not only related to the institution, but also to the ways in which it performs its public – the public that works and acts with its own social behaviour and social relations. In that

sense, the role of the proliferating artistic events in the museums of today lie in the transformation of the art institutions into specific production places, factories of a different type. Paraphrasing the title of the first movie ever made (*Workers Leaving*

the Lumière Factory) by Auguste and Louis Lumière, 1895), Hito Steyerl writes along these lines that workers actually never exit the factory. It is also no coincidence that many venues intended for contemporary artistic events actually inhabit former Fordist factories

that were deserted after the relocation of Fordist production to non-Western countries. Occasionally, this invisible and brutally exploited workforce returns to the museum, to the now cultured and entirely re-designed Fordist factory in order to

perform (as in Santiago Sierra's work with illegal immigrants, for example in *250 cm Line Tattooed on Six Paid People* from 1999). At such events, when the ones doing the work are people *sans papiers* – illegal workers, refugees or underprivileged people,

whose existence is very often reduced to bare life – sociality is evoked through the audience's responsibility and repulsion toward these contemporary art events. Their ambivalent position is further stressed by the fact that they are temporarily paid by the

museum institution in order to evoke a response from the audience and establish the 'critical public'. The old productive force returns to the museum as a Fordist ghost, creating a sense of guilt in the midst of social enjoyment at the new venues for the

production of culture. But very rarely does this return of the workers actually create an antagonism that would endanger the institution itself and mess with the production of the public. This naturally puts a question mark over the institution,

addressing the aesthetic spectrality of the production of political subjectivity.

The focus of artistic events has therefore moved from the autonomy of the performer or gesture to the autonomy of the audience, whose number, along with its

strain (decisions made, behaviour, gestures and movements, presence or absence), establishes the work; these people actually work for the artwork. In this sense, Bourriaud is precise in his observation of the “relational aspect of contemporary works”, where artworks are not

only understood as moments of sociability but also produce the social through the exploration of relations.⁸⁵ However, there is something to this production of the social that is overlooked in his analysis. It concerns the essence of the problem

of the political. What Bourriaud fails to stress is the question of exploitation: the social effort invested to create the audience of the museum, to create the new dispersed and autonomous public for the contemporary institution. This social is therefore not *a priori*

emancipatory (or political in Bourriaud's sense), but part of the exploitation, going hand in hand with other processes of human exploitation in this post-Fordist mode of working.

The social thus produced is precarious, fleeting and affective,

and it does not have a belonging, enduring, material or local character. This is the relational social that constantly improves, rehearses and develops the ways in which our affective and linguistic behaviours can be shared, negotiated, played and violated.

This is also in accord with the shifts in the understanding of the museum's role in relation to the public – where the public is rethought as a multitude: “We do look at art, inhabit the spaces of art in various forms of collectivity, and in the process we

produce new forms of mutuality, of relations between viewers and spaces rather than between viewers and objects. Beyond the shared categories of class, or taste or political or sexual orientations, another form of ‘WE’ is produced.”⁸⁶ Rogoff

writes about the
performativity of
relations, about the
performative function
of observation and
participation, which
forms an important
part of the museum's
public. Although this
observation discloses
the shift of the museum
to more collective

forms and rightly
addresses the
performative dimension
of the audience, this
statement is also
problematic if linked to
the heavy increase in
such events. This 'we'
of the contemporary
public can namely be
related to the invisible
work that the audience

performs at today's
museums and by means
of which it gives back
the live and spectacular
value to the museum as
a place of active,
common, political and
rebellious
contemporary
experience.

Despite the live
nature of the

experience, the collaborative participation of the visitor and the dynamic character of the exchange, this is neither an authentic experience (which is more often considered the 'traditional' act of static looking) nor a personal one. Instead,

and above all, it is a social experience of an event that must be endlessly circulated and shared. For this reason, the experience at a contemporary artistic event must be random, temporary and non-binding while the visitor often experiences their

experience and shares it with others without any sense of belonging or responsibility. In recent years, artistic institutions have become places of sociality and community processes, laboratories realizing coexistence in various ways. But it is

questionable whether
this shift of sociality
and community
formation in the sphere
of contemporary art
really opens up
possibilities for
emancipatory political
articulation, or whether
this shift finds in the
contemporary art
institution a museum

refuge for the vanishing
processes and
possibilities of life. In
this sense, the
exploitation in the
scope of contemporary
artistic events is very
similar to the more
general and all-
embracing processes of
subjectivization and the
formation of

communities in
contemporary
capitalism: it springs
from the appropriation
of human potentiality,
human linguistic skills
and affective forces.

The evidence
supporting this claim
can be found in the
various types of work
performed by the

audience at this type of event; they are very close to affective and cognitive work in general. For example, a short-term effort on the part of the audience, an effort that hardly represents strain, is frequently at the core of contemporary artistic events. On the

other hand, there is plenty of social violence – a sort of rehearsal of delinquency, transgressions, aversion and negotiation. It is not usually about crude violence, but is usually mental, verbal and emotional, demanding from the audience

certain skills, the acceptance of challenges, presence or absence, engagement or disinterest, which calls for many entirely different affective skills. Another skill that is frequently performed at these events is the exchange and circulation of gifts and

obligations, again
demanding from the
audience work with
affective powers and
engagement in terms of
'critical' social
situations. Such strains
are very close to what
is today frequently
called affective and
cognitive work, in
which people work

with their human
potentials. Close
parallels can be
observed between the
linguistic, affective and
cognitive work of the
audience at
contemporary artistic
events and the
contemporary role of
the museum as the
disseminator and

organiser of these forms of perception, which also reminds us of the problematic nature of several aspects of the contemporary production of subjectivity. In this sense, the people from the audience at the contemporary artistic

event work as autonomous workers, managing their 'affective, social and cognitive skills'⁸⁷ in the scope of post-Fordist production.

It is true that contemporary artistic events are connected to the strong desire of numerous artists to

emancipate sociality
from production,
establish another public
sphere, engage in
political gestures and
rehearse disobedience.
This desire gets caught
up in the dispersed
social space of the
museum, where
deviance from the
capitalist system is

systematically developed; however, the testing situation rarely transgresses the limits of the experiment. In that sense, “the museum is not a public sphere, but rather places its consistent lack on display.”⁸⁸ According to Paolo Virno, this

lack is characterized as the need for another public sphere – one where the creation of subjectivity would be tightly linked to creative, political and imaginative independence from the interests of capitalist production. At contemporary artistic

events, we participate
in the circulation of
experience, which is
situational, abstracted
and ephemeral – an
experience where
lasting political or
affective alliances are
seldom formed.
Actually, we perform
the public (which
capitalizes and

consumes human and
communicative forces)
at the core of the lack
of the public. This
circulation of
experience forms a
multitude of visitors
that has the “ability to
anticipate unexpected
opportunities and
coincidences, to seize
chances that present

themselves, to move with the world.”⁸⁹ This last quote is actually a description of the post-Fordist worker, but it can easily be used for the description of contemporary audiences at artistic events.

Contemporary
artistic events can

therefore also be understood as a kind of aesthetic and social training, playing at and experiencing forms of sociality – a sociality without continuity, a relation without belonging. “These are the skills people don’t learn in the workplace; nowadays workers

learn such required abilities by living in big cities, by seeking out aesthetic experiences, having social relationships, creating networks: all things that workers learn specifically outside the workplace, in real life in the contemporary big city.”⁹⁰ In this

sense, the museum factory as a dispersed social space produces a specific public sphere without the public, a constant training and exchange of linguistic, social and political activity but without the antagonism of an enduring location and without antagonistic

consequences springing from social effort. In this, the artist is a facilitator, the one who creates the conditions to communicate and share. This also entails giving away the artist's autonomy to the audience in order for the artist to be exploited.

Contemporary artistic events and performances have become exercises in social profanity and the exploitation of social forms: exercises in the pure profanity of the fact that our social activity no longer has a public dimension. In this sense, the museum

is a social factory that the workers have returned to, or, as Steyerl would say, never really left.

The first movie ever made, *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*, shows the movement of workers leaving through the factory gate, with the place of

work left in darkness. Now, the workers are returning to the factory and the place is becoming increasingly illuminated and social; the work is shown (performed) more and more. It is illuminated through the display of a lack: what it truly lacks is an outside, another

public sphere that would use all these social skills and strains to form a new political subjectivity.

To conclude: in the last decade, especially with the transformation of artistic institutions into ‘places for sociality’, the contemporary art

institution very often has the role of capturing the life force of such a mass and performing it as the 'public'; in this, the audience is provided with political, social and affective dimensions. At the event, this unidentified mass and its dispersed

effort are transformed into a public (social or even political) force, and the abilities of the audience are on display. It would not be enough to conclude that contemporary artistic institutions just appropriate the 'life force' of these performances and

freeze the experience
into spectacle. Such a
statement would imply
that the participatory
events of several
decades ago were
somehow more
authentic than their
contemporary
reanimations.
Something else takes
place in the

exploitation of
audience ability.

In many
contemporary works
focussing on the social,
affective and cognitive
abilities of the
audience, there are
unfounded parallels
drawn between the
activation of the
audience and 'the

public', where the participants with their social abilities and potentiality to act, perform an inseparable community between the audience and the public. Rancière discusses the problematic aspect of the theatrical reforms in which the difference

between the two places (the stage and the place of the audience) is abolished in order to achieve an inseparable community. He strongly defends the difference between the redistribution of the spaces as an intellectual adventure on the one hand and, on the other,

rejects the demand that the theatre as a venue should achieve the gathering of an inseparable community and become an indispensable common place. He compares this wish to the platonic assignment of the bodies to their good, common place.⁹¹ I

would like to point out that his findings can also be used to disclose the dynamics of contemporary performative and participatory events in visual art (especially in the light of its renewed interest in performance over the last decade), where the problematic

is the same.

The activation of the audience and the display of its abilities blur the dividing line between the audience and the artistic work, in which a common experience of art is presupposed (e.g. in theatre reforms). At the core of this common

experience is a shared
democratic dispersion
of actions or free
assemblage of
individual choices. This
tells us how strongly
this shift to the
activation of the
audience is connected
to the belief that the
contemporary
experience of art is

democratic and that it can be understood as an enumeration and equal dissemination of possibilities, decisions, choices or deviations. Interestingly though, this experience of work can only be shared if the artwork itself actually disappears, if the artistic event is

reduced to the sheer display of problematic sociality, which cannot really be judged (indeed, by what criteria could the gesture of sociality be judged?); it is continuously disseminated, accumulated and shared as a immaterial

experience of social relations and abilities. Such an accumulation of social experience transforms the artistic institution into a peculiar common place, with the activation of human capabilities at the core of the aesthetic event. For this reason, it also directly reflects

the cultural and
economic traits of
contemporary
production: the
accumulation of
immense social
production or the
production of sociality
is the main drive
behind today's
economic values.

“We learn and teach,

we act and know as spectators who link what they see with what they have seen and told, done and dreamt. There is no privileged medium as there is no privileged starting point. There are starting points and knot points everywhere from which we learn

something new, if we dismiss firstly the presupposition of the distance, secondly the distribution of the roles, thirdly the borders between the territories.”⁹² In this sense, the audience is always active. It needs to be considered that every spectator is

already an agent (in their own story etc.). This activity of the spectator is always negotiated in connection with a third condition: the emancipation does not take place due to the erasure of the distance between the two parties (the artist and

the audience, the stage and the audience, the artistic venue and the audience), but due to the intermediation of a third condition, an in-betweenness, which is actually the artwork itself. The intermediation of the third condition is key when we discuss

intellectual
emancipation and the
ways it can be
connected to the
participating role of the
audience. This

intermediate condition
is the artwork, assessed
from an unpredictable
and unbridgeable
distance.

Due to the

problematic blurring of
the dividing line
between the audience
and the work and the
equalling of the
audience with the
public, an erasure of
the ability to judge
takes place, which also
enables the
transformation of our
social abilities into the

unity of spectacle. The whole negotiation process is only possible due to the intermediation of a third party (artwork, book, poem, the artist's subjectivity, especially in performance art). The process was aptly described by John Cage in connection with his

work 4.33: “The performance should make clear to the listener that the hearing of the piece is his own action – that the music, so to speak, is his, rather than composer’s.”⁹³ This is a description of artwork, which we know only exists as a radical

denial of its means, but at the same time also discloses the main common condition for the separation: the work that persists between the audience and the author. The listening ability is therefore not about a social gesture, but about a constructive

and active aesthetic component of the work itself, which is a result of the negotiation between numerous separations and arrangements of abilities. In this sense, we wrongly equate participation with the desire to be with others and share our abilities

for what is common in
the work. We also
falsely equate the
audience with the
public instead of
always viewing it as
separate from the
public, as something by
means of which we
temporarily leave the
public outside and
rehearse new

adventures in how to be together through being separated.

3.4. Between One and Many: Collaboration

In the first part of this chapter I mostly discussed the ways in which sociality enters

art and how the excess of sociality changes the role of the spectators or the public to which the artistic work refers. I focussed especially on visual art, where a marked shift towards more participatory and performative forms of artistic work can be felt; this shift must be

examined together with
some traits of
contemporary
capitalism, changes in
the status of
contemporary visual
institutions and
changes in the way in
which participatory
work is understood. In
this part of the chapter
I would like to show

that these changes in
the way of working
also affect the
contemporary
performing arts.

I am not going to
focus on the relation to
the spectator; the
spectator is already at
the centre of
discussions on the
performing arts due to

the nature of the medium. It is more interesting to reflect from the perspective of the excess of sociality; this enables us to see new processes of work in the performing arts in relation to the omnipresent production of sociality in capitalism.

In a newspaper column, the philosopher Renata Salecl once described the story of Randy Pausch, which also raises numerous questions in connection with the symptomatic relationship between time management and collaboration.⁹⁴ In

2007, Carnegie Mellon University organised a series of lectures entitled *The Last Lecture*, for which professors were asked to talk about what was really on their minds. If they had to deliver the last lecture of their lives, what would that have been like and on

what subject? The invitation from the university with the rhetorical implications of determinacy was clearly intended to challenge the lecturers and prompt their imagination to yield some added value. The challenge got an entirely different twist

to it in September 2007 with the lecture entitled *Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams*, given by Randy Pausch, a Carnegie Mellon University professor of computer science. After stating that he had been diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer and only had

half a year left to live,
he began to talk in an
optimistic and
humorous way about
his childhood dreams,
giving insights into
computer science and
also giving advice on
creating multi-
disciplinary
collaborations, group
work and interactions

with others. All this was accompanied by enchanting life lessons and even push-ups on stage. His lecture immediately received media attention. The lecture video became an online hit on social networking sites such as YouTube, Google Video, etc., and within

a few days, the promise of Rausch publishing a book of his lecture was worth between 6 and 7 million dollars. His story was followed by the inevitable spectacle, with compassion growing parallel to market value.

I begin the chapter

on collaboration with
this story because there
are several
coincidences involved
that can disclose the
amazing relations
between the experience
of time and
collaboration. A surplus
of the story that merits
our attention came
about later, when

professor Pausch, at that point a celebrity, was already fighting the terminal stage of his illness. Surrounded by the media frenzy in which collective identification was growing parallel with the anticipated profit from his works, Pausch agreed to give another

lecture at Columbia University, in which he discussed time management. He talked about the most efficient ways of making use of time, how to create manageable plans, multiple schedules and efficient meetings, and how to go to bed with an empty inbox. This

was something Pausch was an expert on in his life, but it of course acquired a completely different, much more metaphysical dimension when he accepted the aforementioned invitation. Salecl describes the obsession with time management

as a desperate attempt to look behind the unbearable mask of death. There is no mystery behind the final fact of death or – whatever our strategy may be – behind the obsessive time management or refusal of all timelines; all strategies are equally

unproductive.⁹⁵ The last period of Pausch's life is intriguingly commemorated by the book *The Last Lecture*, which, apart from providing optimistic life guidelines, also deals with the subject of collaboration and ways of collaboration in research and time

management. The strange combination of issues together with the unavoidable life prognosis is neither a result of a publishing strategy nor purely coincidental. It can also be understood as a peculiar symptom that discloses the strange relationship between

time and working together, a relationship that is inescapable nowadays: in contemporary society, working together cannot be conceived of separately from time management.

I would like to argue that today there are important economic,

political and
philosophical reasons
for the fact that
collaboration is
understood as a time-
bound constellation
demanding perfected
time management,
organisation and
division. From the
perspective of the
contemporary political

economy, the work processes of collaboration are inseparably connected to time planning. In this, contemporary capital is not only considered something by means of which time can be measured in very concrete terms, but also as progress: in

the political economy, there is also an element of innovation in time. In other words, we all constantly behave as though we were in an already decided race (in which numerous deadlines need to be met), in which it is the abstract goal that determines the present

of the process, its temporal dynamics as well as the ways in which this process is to be articulated, carried out and measured. In this sense, it is even easier to understand the collective identification with the determinacy of the lifetime we still have

left: it springs from the sudden and entirely desperate impossibility of relationships – from the horrible experience of the desperate inability to administer our lives.

“What then is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to

him who asks, I do not know.” (St. Augustine: XI, 14) In this statement, St. Augustine links the difficulty of articulation with the ontological understanding of time. In his theological thought, time is strongly connected to the mystery of the

divine. Approaching the statement from the contemporary perspective, we can find that, today, this unpronounceable ontological understanding has been replaced with a guidable and explicable notion of time. This means that the

contemporary
experience of time
entails a knowledge of
what time is. This
experience of time can
also be connected with
the frequency of the
statement 'Sorry, I
don't have time'; this,
of course, is yet
another description of
our general time

experience. The
contemporary
acceleration of time, a
consequence of the
industrial, economic
and scientific processes
of the last two
centuries, not only
disperse the spatial
coordinates of work
processes (their fixed
and static

territoriality), but have also changed the manners of individualisation of contemporary subjects. According to Jameson, contemporary temporality is schizophrenic in nature. It is about the temporality of the present, but without

any kind of phenomenological connections that would enable us to cling to the past or foresee the future.⁹⁶ However, the experience of the contemporary subject and the individuation of the human being are achievable through multi-layered and

parallel experiences of contemporary time, which must be carefully planned regardless of the possibility of openness and liberation, and have a special, effective time structure. Their chaotic and multi-layered experience needs to be rationalised

by means of operative and effective procedures, in which subjective experiences are necessarily subjected to the common goal.

This argument is also supported by an important work maxim of the last few decades: that of working

together. As Florian Schneider writes, teamwork has been a key notion in the transformed political and economic climate of the 90s; as a synonym, the word cooperation is often used. Based on an understanding of the management theory

that people are
supposed to understand
and believe that
thinking, planning,
decisions and actions
are better when taking
place in collaboration
with others, teamwork
serves as a key notion
for success, in
accordance with the
famous maxim of

Andrew Carnegie from the early twentieth century: “Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision, the ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common

people to attain uncommon results.”⁹⁷

As Schneider further writes, teamwork also represents the subjugation of workers “to an omnipresent and individualized control regime. The concept of the group has replaced the classic one of ‘foremanship’ as the

disciplining force.
Rather than through
repression, cost
efficiency was
increased by means of
peer-pressure and the
collective identification
of relatively small
groups of multi-skilled
co-workers.”⁹⁸

For this reason,
teamwork is part of the

obsessive
administration of the
neoliberal subject, who
has to be free from
their inner constraints –
creative, innovative
and virtuous. The
subject, who, at least
since the late 1960s
onwards, has been able
to reveal their
subconscious desires

and free themselves from the permanent feeling of mortality. At the same time, this creative and value-generating subject is free from the restraints of society and the difficulties posed by differences and otherness. Not only can he/she freely work

with others, otherness
itself becomes a value
in collaboration. In this
obsessive
administration of the
subject's self, refusal is
only allowed
occasionally; from time
to time, it is possible to
escape, maybe on
holiday, into drugs or
(most unfortunately) to

hospital. The paradox is also that the immaterial work force, into which so much hope for collaboration has been invested over the last few decades, is (as Matteo Pasquinelli ironically stated), in a kind of “immaterial civil war” and not a struggle against new

forms of exploitation:
“It is the well-known
rivalry within academia
and the art world, the
economy of references,
the deadline race, the
competition for
festivals, the envy and
suspicion among
activists. Cooperation is
structurally difficult
among creative

workers, where a prestige economy operates the same way as in any star system (not to mention political philosophers!), and where new ideas have to confront each other, often involving their creators in a fight.”⁹⁹ Can we then imagine a different

mode of collaboration
that would not
inevitably end in
having no time at all,
precisely at the point
when we actually begin
to collaborate? Can we
also collaborate with
no revolutionary,
corporate, metaphysical
deadlines on the
horizon? As Schneider

argues, the question is how new dimensions of working together could be reflected on, conceived of and at the same time distanced from the “free wheeling and well-meaning strategies of anti-authoritarianism on the one side or the brutal force of coercing

cooperation on the other".¹⁰⁰ What is it, then, that makes collaboration transformative and how do collaborative subjects really inflict change?

Today, it is so difficult to think about collaboration as a transformative process

because there is a certain excess of collaboration in our daily lives: we become most visible when collaborating. Not surprisingly, collaboration is a key issue, not only in politics (which is somehow cynical given the other meaning of

‘collaboration’, which is connected with treason), but also in contemporary economy and culture. Collaboration is closely related to the mobility and flexibility of contemporary labour and even seems to be inscribed into the value of labour as based on

the constant production and exchange of communications, relationships, signs and languages.

Collaboration locates people in the present (time); it is only through collaboration, on the constantly changing map of places, that people can

actually become visible
in the present, where
they constantly add to
the contemporary flow
of money, capital and
signs. Interestingly, the
other can most
frequently be
encountered in the
same working
community that
enables this

contemporary mobility:
more and more 'non-
collaborative or non-
belonging' people or
groups move in the
invisible and deadly
channels of illegality,
poverty, invisibility and
flight. We could say
that collaboration,
communication and
connection belong in

the most fetishized fields of the present day. According to Paolo Virno, the fundamental abilities of the human being are currently at the forefront of production, with language, thought, self-reflection and the ability to learn as the principal characteristics

of contemporary public labour. Contemporary production consists of common linguistic and cognitive habits (i.e. the affective and intellectual exchange of knowledge); it is the constitutive element of the post-Fordist production of labour. “All the workers enter

into the production as
much as they are
speaking-thinking. This
has nothing to do, mind
you, with
‘professionalism’ or with
the ancient concepts of
‘skill’ or
‘craftsmanship’: to
speak/to think are
generic habits of the
human animal, the

opposite of any sort of specialisation.”¹⁰¹

For Virno, this can be denoted as preliminary sharing, which is the basis of contemporary production. In his view, sharing is in opposition to the traditional division of labour. There are no longer objective technical

criteria to regulate working together and to define the responsibility of each worker in their own specialised sphere. Or, as Virno writes, “the segmentation of criteria is instead of that, explicitly arbitrary, reversible, changeable.”¹⁰² Along

these lines, the interesting notion of the process of sharing can also be interpreted as a specific understanding of collaboration as an exchange of differences, creations and innovations and no longer as the hierarchical division of

tasks. For Virno, the problem arises when such sharing has no political effect and does not effect change within a political community. “The

public character of the intellect, when it does not take place in a public sphere, translates into the

unchecked proliferation of hierarchies, as groundless as they are thriving.”¹⁰³

This influences the ruthless mode of individuation in terms of the complete subjugation of the worker’s self or, in Virno’s words, results in “personal dependence”, which I

already discussed in the previous chapter. The fetishized status of collaboration can also tell us something about what Virno terms the “non-public public sphere”, which reflects the one-dimensional character of the global networks and communication

channels. “Because this sphere is not a political sphere, the non-public public sphere thus created can produce the most devastating consequences: collective hallucinations of fear, occult forms of superstition and general paranoia.”¹⁰⁴

Or, if we apply this to the notion of collaboration: when collaboration fails to inflict change within the public sphere, it is not part of *res publica* and can produce unrestrained forms of oppression.

It seems that there is something about our

daily rhythm, in the way we experience this sharing of language and thought, which pushes us into a state of constant mobility, flexibility and precariousness, where nothing is stable but the deadline of working together, and where space is generated as a

consequence of
mobility.

In 2006, Eleanor
Bauer, an American
choreographer and
dancer based in
Brussels, completed her
research on the Brussels
dance community. In
her text, she
humorously tackles the
notion of the mobility

of contemporary performance artists, the changed status of this flexible and disembodied labour, and the value of the community that has resulted from such collaborative mobility of artists. Besides offering picturesque descriptions of the

mobility of the
contemporary
performance artist,
with an obligatory Mac
computer and multiple
toothbrushes, one of
the last paragraphs of
her research describes
the performing artist in
the following way:
“The performing artist
him/herself is a

resource, a located
node of activity and
hub for information
that processes and
produces within the
interstices of culture
and community. In a
neo-collective or post-
collective model, the
artists that remain in
pro-community
engagement must

maintain a highly individual-oriented strength and productivity while remaining connected to the world and to each other, each highly differentiated while in constant collaboration with a larger network of other creative, productive individuals

that support and engage in each other's interests. This description is ambitious considering what it requires in terms of time and energy, and generosity of course, as we are not paid for keeping in touch even when our work depends on it.”¹⁰⁵

Let us ask ourselves, where this accurate description of the highly ambitious performance artist actually comes from. Is this not the description of the contemporary worker, equipped for continuous high performance? That of the always critical and

active labourer, whose subjectivity is entirely subjected to the modes of contemporary capitalist production? The fact that the performance artist has some generosity and even collaborates free of charge doesn't save him or her from the contemporary forms of

exploitation. The generosity puts him/her at the core of the contemporary mode of individuation, where it is precisely their extra time and energy that are demanded from the subject. Couldn't that description also be read as a description of an

artist who desperately struggles with the public character of their work which, at the same time, is not public at all (except maybe within a small, specialised operative circle of people who delegate value to each other)?

Over the last decade,

collaboration has become a key issue in the vocabulary of dancers, choreographers and other performing artists. There are many performances dealing with collaboration as well as conferences and lectures on that subject. As Myriam Van

Imschoot writes in one of her letters on collaboration in contemporary dance, the word appears very often, “it gained a currency of a catch phrase.” However, “do we speak more about collaboration because dance makers collaborate more than

they used to, say, a decade ago?"¹⁰⁶ The interest in collaboration could, of course, also be connected with the changes in the understanding of artistic subjectivity. The subjectivity of the artist is no longer understood as a singular, self-centred

subjectivity. The process of artistic creation is now much more oriented towards the research-related, transdisciplinary and performative aspects of work. This can also be related to the disappearance of professional divisions, as discussed by André

Lepecki. For some time now, the divisions between choreographers, dancers, critics, producers and dramaturges have been fading. Thus, each of these professions has theoretical and practical knowledge from other fields at its

disposal – another factor that reinforces collaboration and makes it visible in contemporary artistic policies. Lepecki relates this disappearance to the dissolving of the stable epistemological categories of “what dance is”, which has also caused changes in

the position of the artist, critic and producer.¹⁰⁷ Such changes have resulted in different models of collaborative work and become part of the contemporary cultural policies and economies of production. As Imschoot writes, this reorientation on the

artistic scene may
explain why the
collaboration label
circulates more
frequently, but “it does
not explain why it does
so with so much
emphasis, to the point
of sheer over-
determination and a
compulsive repetition
of the term. It seems as

if collaboration functions as uncritical marker or signifier, an honorific that must signal more than it actually performs.”¹⁰⁸

The notion itself is linked to a certain crisis; the high frequency of its use reveals that there is some sort of anxiety at

work in the use of this term. I would agree with Van Imschoot that there is something highly problematic at work in the compulsive repetition of this term. This repetitive use is tightly linked to the changed notion of labour, where language and the thinking being

are at the forefront of contemporary production. The anxiety springs from the inability to really inflict change, to make the processes of collaboration part of *res publica*, to open up one's political and transformative potentiality. What

Imschoot detects in this obsessive use and practice of collaboration is that, ultimately, we have no time at all. What takes place is an anxiety of subjugation, an unbearable attempt to look behind the mask of the race determined in advance, whereby, at

the same time, we just won't admit that we are already participating intensely in that same race.

It is well-known that, from the second half of the twentieth century onwards, we witnessed a lot of research on the nature of artistic collaborative processes.

When analysing those processes in the visual arts, the art historian Charles Green showed that those processes sprang from a particular crisis of the singular artistic subject; they were a result of the crisis of authorship as such. The outcome of those collaborative

processes was not necessarily more democratic and didn't result in a more dispersed working process. As Green noticed, authorship was reinforced in most cases; collaboration therefore gave extra value to the contemporary artist's

self.¹⁰⁹ The visibility of collaboration processes is therefore tightly linked to the development of cultural production and economic processes in contemporary culture. As I wrote earlier on, this visibility was further reinforced by the language and

creativity coming to the
forefront of
contemporary
production. With new
communicative
possibilities,
collaborations became
multiple and
simultaneous: “People
meet and work together
under circumstances
where their efficiency,

performance and
labour power cannot be
singled out and
individually measured;
everyone's work points
to someone else's.
Making and
maintaining
connections seems
more important than
trying to capture and
store ideas. One's own

production is very peculiar yet it is generated and often multiplied in networks composed of countless distinct dependencies and constituted by the power to affect and be affected. At no point in the process can this be arrested and ascertained, for it gains

its power by not having explicit points of entry or exit as a normative work scenario might.”¹¹⁰

Schneider points out the power of exchange and sharing, but these can only be purposeful and unimpeded if they enter the public sphere, which is connected to

the notion of possessing
knowledge, storing
ideas, copyright and
the right to
contemporaneity.

Artists of today
collaborate, but they
can be prevented from
doing so if their
collaboration becomes
yet another capture
machine for the

privatisation and storage of ideas. As a partial exception, let me mention the artistic collaboration that is developed under the influence of open code and other ways of programming and sharing within the community. Among the choreographic projects,

let me mention the Everybodys Toolbox platform; based on the open code model, which is intended for sharing choreographic procedures, working methods, assignments and rules (scores).¹¹¹ In this way, numerous methods of working have opened up to the

sharing of artistic processes under the influence of open ways of working and thus have productively broached the hierarchical problem of authorship.

Nevertheless, we must not forget that today parallel network manners of working

have been replaced by
blogs and social media.
In their scope,
collaboration
frequently represents
yet another way of
exploiting our
communicative work.
With our investments
and constant
communicative work,
we actually participate

‘free of charge’ in the capitalisation and privatisation of electronic networks.¹¹²

Today, things come to a halt due to an excess of collaboration, which makes the artist ‘contemporary’ in the sense that the artist belongs to the present, but his/her position as

such is not radically changed; there is no potentiality to this halt, only actuality.

Nevertheless, the excess of collaboration could also be read as a particular reminder, one that is also discussed in Imschoot's letter. She explicitly writes that the notion

of collaboration might also be a cover-up for its antidote, “genuine exchange.”¹¹³ What is genuine exchange though? Can we talk about a difference between collaboration as a procedure (for its own sake) and true collaboration? The problem is that such a

caesura springs from
the remedial but naïve
hope that there is
always something more
real than the
relationships in which
we are already
continuously
participating. This is a
complex problem and
can also become a kind
of trap that leads to

nostalgic, utopian longing for proper encounters, which have disappeared. At the same time, this problem of ‘genuine exchange’ is extremely challenging. I could relate it to a statement by Badiou that Slavoj Žižek cites at the end of his book *Violence*: “It is

better to do nothing than to contribute to the invention of formal ways of rendering visible that which Empire already recognises as existent".¹¹⁴ In this book, Žižek analyses the problem of violence and discusses it in connection with the

harsh critique of participation and constant demand for political activity. After several examples, Žižek ends the book by refusing any kind of action; paradoxically, this stance comes at the end of the book, when the book has already been written.¹¹⁵ The

demand for a refusal of action comes at the end of some very agile activity. This should not be understood as a paradox but as something that reinforces the power of critical analysis. It discovers the possibility of the potentiality of critical articulation,

which was active due to the urgency of the refusal.

The demand for ‘genuine exchange’ can thus be a reminder, a trigger that can help us talk about the potential of collaboration as an agent of change. We need to think about the future of collaboration

in the rupture between
an impossible refusal of
the collaborative
process in which we are
already implemented,
and the possibility of
genuine exchange,
which has yet to
happen. The future is
not related to actuality
as a realisation of its
'becoming', but finds

itself in the rupture of something which has yet to happen. In this sense, the imaginative potential of collaboration can open to the wide and unpredictable practice of working together. But in order to enable this, we have to deal with the excess of

collaboration, with the fact that the reflection on collaboration takes place at the moment of its crisis. This crisis deeply affects the way we think about the future of collaboration and the way we relate it to potentiality.

“The absolutely desperate current state

of affairs fills me with
hope”.¹¹⁶ Marx’s
remark not only
discloses the idea that
the antidote is quite
close, but also a special
relation to time and
historicity, which,
according to Leland
Delandurantaye, can
also be found in
Benjamin’s and

Agamben's work.¹¹⁷ Benjamin describes the vision of the drowning man, and Agamben develops the concept of radical potentiality, which discloses the critical reversibility of the moment, i.e. the present time itself. Giorgio Agamben writes about the

inevitable paradox of
this peculiar
philosophical concept
of potentiality. You can
only become aware of
your potential to exist,
create and take a step
forward when this
potential is not
realised. Therefore,
potentiality is a
temporal constellation,

separate from action; it is not translated into action at all. Potentiality can only come to light when not being actualised – when the potential of a person or a thing is not realised. An intrinsic part of potentiality is a certain failure, an impossibility of

actualisation. Only when the potential is not actualised is one open to one's being in time.. In this openness, one experiences *the plurality of the ways* in which life comes into being and is exposed to the plurality of possible actions.¹¹⁸ Today's crisis springs from a

permanent and ruthless
actualisation of
potentiality; in this, the
form of temporality
itself (the manner in
which a human being
becomes human) is
entirely conditioned by
its finalisation. The
actualisation of
potential has become a
primary force of the

value on the contemporary cultural, artistic and economic markets. To put it another way: with the rise of new ways of working (non-material work, affective work, cognitive work), the primary capital sources of value became human language, imagination

and creativity. This transition came about in many different ways and it can be seen quite clearly, for example, in the constant re-questioning of the conditions that produce new states of production. The present time of permanent actualisation also

profoundly changes the ways in which we perceive and experience collaboration. The problem is that, due to this kind of exploitation of human potentiality, collaboration has been structured as a specific time mode where collaboration equals

actualisation, an
obsession with the
present time.

In the future of
collaboration, it would
be essential to
intervene into its
aforementioned excess
and radically rethink
the exclusivity of the
present – the thing that
brings people together

into common work.
This is only possible if
the collaboration takes
place without the
impediments of the
present: the
impediments caused by
deadlines, speed,
simultaneous
connections, the
illusion of mobility, the
hypocrisy of the

difference, the illusion
of eternity, and
constant actualisation.
Today, it is quite
difficult to preserve in
potentiality (but
perhaps nevertheless
easier due to the major
crisis that is on the
horizon and has
already refuted so
many predictions),

open the path towards
the material
conditioning of actions
and foresee future
events independently of
the already given
scenario. How can
common work be open
to unexpected change?
It is time for us to
return to the issue of
time and its

connections with
collaboration in artistic
processes or in the
creation of
performance. If
collaboration
represents common
work, the decisive
factor will be the
quality of the meeting
that enables this
common work – the

quality of time.¹¹⁹

3.5. A Portrayal of Non-Functioning Community

In addition to his visionary critique of spectacle society and his notorious drunkenness, Guy Debord was also known

for his ruthless exclusion of even his closest friends and collaborators from the Situationist movement. The entire history of Situationism can be read as a series of exclusions and rejections of many notable members. This is also one of the main

reasons for the regular renaming of the movement, which served to disassociate it from the former collaborators. Some of the popular ways for Debord to cut people off were to publicly refer to the inappropriateness of their characters and

even publish their obituaries, as in the case of Wolman and Potlach in 1957: “Wolman had an important role in the organization of the Lettriste Left-wing in 1952, then in the foundation of LI. Author of ‘megapneumatic’ poems,

a theory of
'cinematochronicity'
and a film, he was a
Lettriste delegate at the
congress of Alba in
September 1956. He
was 27 years old."¹²⁰

Ironically, there is
actually no better form
of necrology for
disclosing the main
flow of time. The flow

of time was significant to many collaborative artistic movements of the twentieth century, especially to the political and artistic avant-garde movements; aiming for future revolutionary goals as the supposed vanguards of history. The necrology for the

excluded member of
the movement is not a
sign that the avant-
garde and
revolutionary flow of
time is progressive and
therefore ruthless to
everyone who does not
follow the timeline of
the most vanguard
community of
collaborators. More

interestingly, such a timeline is deeply ambivalent and causes splits in the abovementioned avant-garde artistic communities, which seem to be collectively ‘tuned’ to the society of the future. According to Susan Buck-Morrs, it is about a kind of

schizophrenic
temporality where the
revolutionary time that
still has to come exists
parallel to the present,
in which the latter
needs to be more active
than ever before (that
is, if we do not want
the future project or
revolution to fail).
Buck-Morrs writes

about simultaneous
temporality when
analysing the time
structure of the
revolutionary state,
which is always divided
into the time of the
revolution and the time
of the regime.¹²¹ This
simultaneous time
structure can also be
implemented on a

smaller scale – in the
collaborative structure
of the (artistic)
community oriented
towards finality: the
future can only be the
goal when the present
is fully activated in its
collaborative agency –
alliances,
collaborations, working
together and being

together. Nevertheless, there is a rub to all this, and this brings us to its schizophrenic character: the future is only possible if the present is sacrificed at the same time – when the social connections are continuously erased. There is a difference between the

time that still has to come and the time of present events, defined by processes like friendships, alliances, love, working together, collaboration and being together. Communities focussing upon a common future goal are not based so much on the erasure of

subjectivity in the collective sameness but on a certain spectralisation of even the closest other, in which the other is always already present as a ghost, no matter how strong its present agency is. Under the heavy burden of radical choice (a paradoxical

choice, that is, since no choice is really possible), the friends' ghosts are thus caught in the ungraspable gap between the future and the present.

Twentieth century art history knows many collective achievements that, on the one hand, constantly publicly

disclose their
collaborators as
expelled others and
ghostly heretics in the
name of common
future goals and, on the
other, constantly seek
alliances and
friendships on the basis
of which the artistic
production becomes
reconfigured.

Nevertheless, too many ghosts and failures have contributed to the fact that communities with collective ideals are ridiculed nowadays; there is a lot of disappointment in the idea of community in general. But is it nevertheless possible for the community to

exist and not fall into such a double time structure where the other can only be nearby as a ghost?

Without a doubt, the communities of the 1960s were very different from the hierarchical organisation of the Situationists. In 1967,

the actors and members of the Living Theatre group invited their audience to protest and join them in a common act of bodily and sexual liberation on stage. The famous performance entitled *Paradise Now* not only revealed the awakening of the ritualistic character of

the art of the 1960s; it can also reveal a different concept of community and its collaborative structure. The performance was created in a period of huge political disappointments over both political and personal situations, when there was a

strong need for the
liberation and
exploration of new
ways of being together.
One rebellious sentence
from the performance
precisely describes
what was at the core of
these explorations: “I’m
not allowed to take my
clothes off. I’m outside
the gates of paradise.”

As its title formulates with great precision, *Paradise Now* was a way to liberate personal, intimate and sexual desires. New communities can be built as those of equals, friends, brothers, sisters and lovers, who can all be together in the present time of

sensation and pleasure, in the present of the aesthetic reorientation of perception and sensuality. That's also why the members of the audience were invited to join in on the spot and to explore and search together with the members of the theatre group for ways

of liberation and also – very importantly – for ways to do art. Nobody was excluded in advance, everyone was welcome as capable of collaborating and making art. The communities of the 1960s are undoubtedly quite different from the spectral collectives of

the avant-garde. One of the biggest differences can be found in the collaborative structure, which is no longer caught in the split of ambivalent time structure, but discloses the power of the present time in its endless agency. Or, as demanded by Alan

Kaprow in connection with the new art of happening: “all our senses have to be alert, only then can the artistic situations unfold themselves as naturally as the wind ruffles the tree leaves and something can transpire that is as ubiquitous as walking

down a street.”¹²² For art to constantly hold on to the present, be constantly alert in its senses and disclose desires, the community somehow became much more embodied in its manner of collaboration. We can also say that the collaboration became

bodily and fleshy in character. This is a different notion of community, where the bodies collaborate with each other, creating alliances of libidinal energies and basing the common being on desire. Due to the democratisation of the community, the

collaborating other
appeared as a body;
examples of that would
be the desiring bodies
of *Paradise Now* or the
bodies of Marina
Abramović and Ulay,
standing close together
in *Breathing*
In/Breathing Out.
According to the
convictions of the time,

bodies placed close together were able to aesthetically reconfigure time and place, which would have enabled the freedom and liberation of every individual and intimate part of the community.

The collaborative structure of the

communities in the 1960s is therefore very different from the collaboration of ghosts, caught in the gap of history under the heavy burden of radical choice. The flow of bodies and liberated senses can only take place if they are simultaneously present

as differentiated
particularities and
individuals, only as
differences between
desires and
investments. In this
case, the collaboration
happens under the light
burden of endless
choices, including the
exploration of
liberation in *Paradise*

Now: “all creative actions form out of some kind of freedom, nothing bearable happens without some kind of freedom”. The collaborating other is present through an immediate freedom of choices; this freedom of choices provides it with his/her body, senses,

particular desires and creative energies. There is also a strange paradox at work here; very interestingly, it can be observed in the practice of contact improvisation, which first emerged in the early 1970s. The movement is developed through the freedom of

the body to improvise
and choose depending
on contact with the
body moving close to
it. Why is it, then, that
the ultimate
performance is more or
less the same every
single time? The
endless participatory
freedom of bodily
collaborators, the

spontaneity of the democratic communities from that period, is only possible through a series of strict protocols that enable a ‘free’ collaboration scenario because they are merely technical. Participatory freedom is thus always the

freedom of realization through a certain protocol that allows us to participate and do whatever we desire without hindrances. As is well-known today, forms of power were not eradicated in the 1960s, but underwent a fundamental change; the power inhabited

the networks, modes of
collaboration, the
protocols of the private,
the flows of the
corporeal, the
microstructures of
intimacy. The paradox
at the core of
participatory freedom
is that every form of
participatory freedom
requires the same

scenario for the body to be free. This becomes problematic when the closest other is the body: bodies only participate and are free within the already given scenarios for different others, inside the already given scenarios for 'free' desires. Today, this

paradox of the 1960s
communities is at the
core of the
contemporary
production of desire,
where the scenarios for
freedom are
increasingly unified,
privatized and
controlled.

Consequently, the other
is also increasingly

represented and
produced under
previously given
scenarios: ‘paradise
now’ is a world of prêt-
à-porter identities,
bodily styles, glorified
differences in the
desiring unity of the
present time.

People tend to work
with each other, they

want to be together and share work together; what is it that holds them together? The French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy offers a way to bring back the corrupted notion of community by changing the notion of community as finality to the ordinary state of

being together.
“Community on the
contrary is the ordinary
being together, without
any assumption of
common identity,
without any strong
intensity, but exposed
to banality, to the
‘common’ of
existence.”¹²³ It is
therefore not a

depiction of the common as dominated by finality that can take different forms (total man, society without classes, the liberated body, liberated subjectivity, etc.). The common is also not something that is tightly intertwined with the active

transformation of
twentieth century
history. Instead it is
merely the ordinary
state of being together,
deprived of all
historical tasks. “The
retreat opens and
continues to keep open,
this strange being-the-
one-with-the-other to
which we are

exposed.”¹²⁴

This new understanding of community is also evident in some other artistic work by Chto delat?, the group I started with and would also like to conclude this chapter on the production of sociality, particularly because it

is about a group of artists and theorists who are closely connected to the topics of working and collaboration, but in an entirely different way to their predecessors.

The sociality of collaboration is also at the core of their early video work *The Builders*

(2005), which I first saw exhibited in a dark room on two projection screens hanging next to each other.¹²⁵ One constantly displayed a slide-show of photographs of the Chto delat? members, and the other the English subtitles to their informal

conversation in russian
coming from the
speakers. The
photographs showed a
group of informally
clad young people with
drinks and cigarettes,
standing next to and
sitting on a weedy wall
on a rather cold night.
The people talk and
change postures, hug,

lean toward one another, touch, support one another, turn, sit or stand, push each other back and forth or smile to each other. Their discussion takes place on a single spot as if they were shut into a painting.

They are actually connected with one –

their video namely starts and ends with *Builders of Bratsk* (1960), a famous portrait by Viktor Popkov. It shows five workers (four men and one woman) resting in their collective creation of the new city of Bratsk. Embodying all the qualities of the

socialist-realist style,
this famous work
served as an
introduction to the
Chto delat? video
display, in which its
members start and end
their discussion in
exactly the same poses
as those of the workers
portrayed. It is
therefore about a

display of work relationships that seems the same, but also could not be more different. “Our group meets quite rarely and this piece was the result of one of those rare meetings. Actually, we’ve been wanting to make a piece about our community for quite

some time, to tell about who we are and what are we doing. A kind of self-analysis, in other words. What inspired us was Viktor Popkov's marvellous painting *The Builders of Bratsk*. This is why we called it Builders. But we didn't try to imitate the heroes of this painting.

For us, the feeling that we're building something is important, so we tried to find out what exactly are we building..."¹²⁶ This is the beginning of the filmed discussion, followed by a fragmented dialogue on "what is community", how people can work

together and reflections
on what lies in-between
art and capitalism,
politics and theory, on
the role of exchange
and conflict, on how to
bring about changes in
art and create
revolutionary art, on
communism and
community, the status
of artists and activists

after the fall of
communism and the
end of social utopias
etc.

The staging of Viktor
Popkov's workers can
also be read as a sort of
historical trace of
removal, leaving only
the frame, the
disposition and the
staging, a phantomic

disposition of bodies.
Or, as one of the voices
in the video comments
on the portrait: “I can
derive some aesthetic
pleasure from this
painting, but it doesn’t
move me socially.” The
frame in which the
bodies are similarly
repositioned also
establishes the

connection and
emphasizes the
difference between
both groups: that of the
builders of Bratsk and
that of the Chto delat?
builders – the artists,
writers and activists
who would also like to
build something, bring
about social change
and actively reflect on

social and political
revolution. It seems
that this kind of
thinking can only take
place if we also
consider the ruins of
the shattered
communist ideals and
the major
disappointment
hanging over all the
possible constructions

of society. Their choice of frame leads to the conclusion that community and common work cannot be discussed without also establishing an attitude with what has not yet been done. Although starting their discussion in the same positions as those of

the workers from Bratsk, they seem to be together accidentally and placed incoherently into an anonymous space. The question that is in the air and that will remain in the air throughout this chapter, is difficult because of its simplicity: how can

working together be possible amid the ruins of community?

The work by the Chto delat? group could of course also be discussed from the perspective of the specific political and social conditions in Russia, in which the political and activist

status of artists is especially threatened due to radical political ideas and new ways of working. The victorious political forces of the last decades that have established themselves on the ruins of communist history are erasing any memory of the articulation of

alternative social and
political desires,
especially those
articulated in
connection with the
common.

The questions that
arise from the
conversation of the
Chto delat? members
and their accidental
common being can be

connected to the broader interests in terms of community and collaboration that have been strongly present in the field of visual arts and contemporary performance over the last two decades. The disappointment with the sense of community

and the shattered utopian political ideals is, let's say, mutual, with numerous artistic works starting to reflect on the community and common work and reformulating them.¹²⁷ The work by the Chto delat? group therefore displays two different ways of being together

and two different articulations of the community. If a community is understood as a description of a group that has something in common, the people in Viktor Popkov's portrait are together because of the common future they are creating

with their brigade work. It is this community that is at the centre of this portrait; the workers' positioning in space is also intended as an ornament, a representation of the order of the community. There is an interesting surplus to

this group of workers building a new city: the group is portrayed at their moment of rest – one of the men is smoking while the two men standing with the woman are doing nothing at all, just looking ahead. Their seemingly working bodies are light and

relaxed as if on a short break; perhaps they are observing the growing city, looking ahead at the future that is still to come. In this future, there is naturally no difference between work and free time; this interesting surplus actually reveals the totality of the society of

the working men and women who, in their moment of break, are staring at what they are jointly creating.

Directed ahead, their gaze can also be interpreted as a look into an entirely known future; we face the portrayal of the common as a finality,

as a known society still to come; they were portrayed at the moment of building it. According to Jean-Luc Nancy, this finality can take various forms (total man, society without classes, liberated subjectivity etc.).¹²⁸ The other display features a group

of young people
changing places,
opposing one another,
joking, bickering,
discussing, but the
sequence of their
photographs is more
reminiscent of those
rather common social
nights with cigarettes
and booze than of a
position of work. The

difference between the two displays is in the manner in which the common is portrayed.

In Popkov's portrait, the common is the only thing portrayed. The people are together because of their common future: community is at the centre of the portrait,

which allows for no additions whatsoever. This common embraces the people during both their work and rest. When this image is replaced by that of Chto delat?, we are suddenly overcome by the feeling of coincidence, that they accidentally happen to

be together in the
presence of the night
without a
representation of the
common and without a
portrayal of order. The
young artists are not
together because their
common being would
be subjected to
progress, teleology,
finality or a future

common goal. Along
Nancy's lines, this
would then be the
'common' of what is
termed 'always already'
– what we share in
connection with
banality and daily life
(the issue of one's own
finality, for example),
the 'sacred profane',
which positions us in

the picture in an
incoherent fashion.
This is a community
without exchange,
universality, economy,
coherence or identity
for there is nothing that
could be shared; there
is no common being. In
other words:
community consists of
the retreat of the

common. A community has therefore little to do with a future common goal or with being unselfish, sharing things, taking responsibility for one's actions and respecting another. It also has nothing to do with the consensus for collaboration and the

pluralist procedures of democratic dissemination. It is not about the outcome of dividing the property we share and dividing it in a democratic and proportional manner.

What, then, is community?

Paradoxically, it is the constant dispossession

of collaboration and its possibilities.

Community can only be arranged; according to Maria Galindo, “we place ourselves next to one another, back to back, one in front of the other, according to the necessities of each specific struggle”. The words of the Bolivian

artist, feminist and
activist disclose some
important
(dis)appearances of the
collaborative other
from the perspective of
the present: “We can
only speak in the first
person. We are neither
interpreters nor
spokeswomen of each
other’s practices and

actions. We do not speak in the name of one another because I am ‘the other’ when I express what I believe in and feel, within a scenario that was never given or borrowed.” This performative gesture of autonomy helps us avoid constantly talking for

the other as well as being constantly talked about ourselves. The need to speak in the first person has little to do with the freedom of choice to speak for ourselves, or better still: with the possibility to embody our special selves in the already given scenario

of freedom. Galindo states this quite clearly: “I am ‘the other’ when I express what I believe in and feel.”¹²⁹ When speaking, she already discloses “this strange being-the-one-with-the-other to which we are exposed”¹³⁰ discussed by Jean-Luc Nancy in his description of the

community of the usual
common being. An
incessant articulation of
space and time occurs.
By means of special
language, Galindo
explicitly shows the
appearance of the
common: the moment
we speak in an explicit
manner, we become the
other and the

connection between meaning, space and time becomes visible.

When reflecting on the community and understanding of collaboration in the Chto delat? member exchange, another interpretation becomes significant. It discloses the moment of

collaboration as part of
immaterial work, as
work with
communicative and
human potentialities
and no longer as a
representation of the
totality of work. In this
sense, the communities
are much more
coincidental and
flexible and are not

connected to a certain space; they are actually not united by work, but over the very specific temporal dimension of meeting.

A meeting is something that enables or prevents life; this is the purpose of meetings, both in life and thinking, Agamben

writes.¹³¹ Collaboration conditions our future life together; if we wish to unclasp time, this naturally means that time needs to be taken out of the obsession with the future and collaborate in the time that has not yet come. Common work is a temporal constellation

that opens up the spatial potentiality for closeness, something that comes across as a neighbouring space, a space added.

Agamben describes an example of such a constellation, which he calls “ease”. According to him, ease is a semantic constellation

where spatial closeness always borders the appropriate time: if the time is not appropriate, the topos that enables the meeting does not exist.¹³² This means that a ‘genuine exchange’ has something to do with potentiality – with the ways in which we

condition our common future. We could not work in the direction of the future without simultaneously changing our way of life, the material protocols of life itself, the way we shift time and experience it. To collaborate means to belong to another

temporal concept –
potentiality. This is the
temporal concept of
“time’s darkness, the
hushed shadows
massing about the stage
of what happens”.¹³³

Chapter 4

Movement, Duration and Post- Fordism

4.1. The Free Time of Dance

In this chapter, let us once more return to the film *Workers Leaving the*

Factory (1895). It shows workers from the Lumière factory as they flow through the factory door, leaving their workplace at the end of the day. The same film also opened the performance *1 poor and one 0* (2008) by BADCo., a Zagreb-based performance

group.¹³⁴ The mass exodus from the factory not only marks the beginning of cinema history, but also the problematic connection between the cinema and work, which is also explored in Harun Farocki's documentary and text with the same title – *Arbeiter Verlassen*

die Fabrik (1995).¹³⁵ In his commentary on the documentary, Farocki states that the primary aim of that movie was to represent motion using the mass exodus of the workers. In Farocki's opinion, there may even have been signs used to coordinate the

movement of the workers. Interestingly, this invisible moment takes place along specific lines, those marking the difference between work and leisure time – between the industrial process and the factory on the one hand and the private lives of the

workers on the other.
The movement of the
workers, their
simultaneously
organised and
spontaneous dispersion
in different directions,
is choreographically
organised and
filmically framed along
the line separating
enclosed industrial

space and private life, strictly rationalised life procedures and so-called flexible leisure time. This is a line between dull work organisation and leisure time when the workers can enjoy themselves; in other words, it divides the mass organisation of

work and the atomised private lives of the workers. The dispersion of the workers renders their workspace invisible: the door of the factory is closed after their departure and the space of work is left in darkness. Farocki mentions that throughout cinema

history, the inside of the factory has only been illuminated when somebody wants to leave, demolish the factory or organise a strike. The inside of the factory has therefore only been featured when it becomes a space of conflict rather than a dull and

repetitive space of
work routine.¹³⁶

The entire
performance *1 poor and
one 0* revolves around
that dividing line by
means of constant re-
entering through the
aforementioned door,
marked with a simple
crossbar on the set. The
performers repeatedly

come through that door, copying the movement of the workers in the Lumière factory movie. It almost seems as though they were in a motion picture experiment by Edward Muybridge, combining many short sequences of movement to give the impression

of time coordination.
In-between those
scenes, they discuss
work-related issues:
“What happens when
you get tired? What
happens when you
leave the work behind?
When the work we
devote ourselves to
makes us too
exhausted? What comes

after work – is it more work? What happens when there is no more work?” These discussions in the performance make clear references to the historical aspects of twentieth century work, especially to the gradual disappearance of that dividing line. In

that sense, they add another aspect to Farocki's observation. The place of work is no longer in darkness, but dispersed everywhere; it is not only a constituent part of leisure time, but intrinsically connected to creative and transformative

potentials. Through the constant repetition of movement from the ‘the first choreographed film ever’, the performance becomes a collection of fragments and memories of movement, revealing that the first movie arrives through a door that now seems to have

been taken off its hinges. The movement of the workers gets captured on a doorstep that no longer exists; today, there is no longer a dividing line between the body movement subjected to the rational organisation of work and the dispersed

atomisation of society. Not only is the division between work and life erased in post-industrial society; the once essential qualities of life after work (imagination, autonomy, sociality, communication) actually turn out to be at the core of

contemporary work.

How is the disappearance of the dividing line between labour and leisure time related to contemporary dance and the conceptualisation of movement? To be able to answer that question, I would first

like to briefly reflect on
the appearance of
twentieth century
contemporary dance
forms, especially on the
fact that their aesthetic
and political potential
was continuously
formed in the
complicated
relationship with
existing production

modes. There are many intersections between the organisation of work production and the conceptualisation of movement in the history of contemporary dance (Taylorism, movement reforms, the return to the natural body, etc.); these intersections

become especially intriguing when they intertwine with the political and aesthetic potential of dance.

It is well-known that, from the beginning of the twentieth century, new dance forms were experienced as something strongly connected to the

potentialities of the
contemporary human
being. The autonomous
movement of the body
opened up new
potentials of human
experience and
relationships, and had
strong emancipating
effects on
understanding the
future. The new,

modern forms of dance (Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Mary Wigman etc.) seemed like a break-up with the old perception modes, whilst showing the possibility of new aesthetic experience. This was because of the intrinsic relationship between movement and

freedom, which was presupposed in almost every attempt at movement reform. As Bojana Cvejić states, even today, “dance still works as a metaphor for going beyond contracts, systems and structures as models of theorizing subjectivity, art, society and

politics.”¹³⁷ According to Cvejić, that may be the case because “movement operates from the middle of things. Makes us step outside the pre-determination of points and positions. Expresses the potential of moving relations.”¹³⁸ It therefore seems that

movement is intrinsically political, in the sense that it tackles the interrelations and dynamism of expressions, the potentiality of what movement could or could not be.¹³⁹

In that ‘middle of things’, movement also operates within the

introductory image
from the text, in the
image where we see the
workers exiting the
factory. The movement
is captured on film only
to disappear into an
unknown future;
nevertheless, it starts at
a particular doorstep,
which frames the
potential of moving

relations in a very specific way. This potential is developed outside the rationalised organisation of work; it is the potential of movement that springs from life without work. The alliances, relations and divisions exist outside the factory, in the space without

work, which not only becomes a political space, but also a field of autonomous aesthetic experience where the crisis of the subject and new forms of kinaesthetic perception were developed and institutionalized through the history of

art in the twentieth century.

It is therefore no coincidence that the dance reforms of the early twentieth century appeared at a time when the movement of the working body in the Fordist factory was heavily rationalised – i.e. when the

organisation of production was based on the scientifically researched kinaesthetic experience which instrumentalised the movement of the body for efficient production. The (mostly female) pioneers of dance (Isadora Duncan, Loie Fuller, Ruth St. Denis,

Mary Wigman,
Valentine du Saint
Point etc.) started
dancing at a time when
the organisational
model of work became
omnipresent, when any
kind of false,
expressive, slow,
stationary, unexpected,
wrong, clumsy,
personal, lazy,

ineffective,
imaginative, additional
movement was
eliminated from the
work performed by the
body.

The utopian
relationship between
movement and freedom
in the beginnings of
contemporary dance
and dance reforms

were therefore not connected to the notion of abstract freedom, but expressed the potential of moving relations outside the factory door. This was a freedom of different kinaesthetic experience, which would not yield to instrumentalisation and efficiency and

would not be subjected to work but discovered the inner potential of the body. One of the ways of describing this experience is the discovery of the 'natural body', which does not have so much to do with resistance to the mechanisation of contemporary life

(whereby the term 'natural' could wrongly imply that it is only about the division between the natural and the artificial), but with the discovery of a new universality, a natural sympathy of one body for another, which is also described by John Martin for

example.¹⁴⁰ The moving relations are no longer subject to dull routine and rationalisation, but vibrate part of the new atomised society of capitalism; they are the relations between the new kinaesthetic subjects.

I would like to argue

that the appearance of dance reforms and modern dance provided a moving alternative to the kinaesthetic experience behind the factory door; subject to strict rationalisation and efficiency, which experience was completely different to the free relations

between free time subjects. Movement experiments were also an important part of Fordist production and the social distribution of bodies in the industrial phase of capitalism. Scientific management (Taylorist) theories, for example, focused on the perfect

synchronisation of the body with the machine, which demanded a radical and absolute interiorisation of movement in the body. Only in that way could the gestures of the body be separated from the experience and endlessly repeated; we could say that the

working gesture can be separated from the experience of work.

The bodies of industrial workers are usually described as machines and their automatic work as alienated. Lurking behind such alienation is an interiorisation of movement so radical

that the body of the
worker actually
becomes alien to the
one who works with it.
Only when the
movement is radically
interiorized can the
body become alien –
the other body, which
can serve the state or
the factory. We are not
dealing with the

alienation of movement
from the body, but with
the radical
interiorisation of
movement in the body,
so that the body
becomes a space of
constant quantitative
division upon minimal
and highly effective
moves. Only in that
way can a spectral and

efficient working
gesture be created and
the movement not
experienced as a
change.

For this reason,
Fordist production was
often represented as
synchronous group
dance moving together;
this dance often
functioned as a critical

representation of the subjugation of the worker's body to the industrialised and mechanistic factory production process. It does not come as a surprise that many popular representations of the assembly line introduced a clumsy worker who interrupted

the group work process with his unforeseeable gestures, like Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times*. These mocking and incapable workers destroyed the entire production process because they were too dreamy to be efficient and too clumsy to work well. This also means

that they experienced movement as change. Rather than being efficient, they demolished the rationalised rules of movement. Rather than moving smoothly, they reacted to the obstacles and the materiality of the machine, with their uncontrolled gestures

springing from their relation outside the body: they were being moved by the world and the objects they operated. The only way to disturb this collective process was often by means of the intervention of an individual body, a body that couldn't follow or

was too clumsy, slow,
dreamy, lazy or
expressive – a body
that took too much
freedom to move,
express itself or achieve
something. The bodily
traits that prevented
the body dancing
together with others
were considered
expressions of

humanism, or even better – that of uncontrollable human nature, which cannot be disciplined. The individual kinaesthetic experience strongly resisted the group harmonization and its subjugation to the rationalised social machine.

However, there is a difference between the interiorisation of movement in dance and the Fordist approach to movement; ultimately, workers can hardly dance, they have to work. Scientific management was therefore successful in interiorizing

movement. It also tried to abolish any kind of additional pleasure that could expose the phantasmagorical character of the institution and thus expose it to ridicule: pleasure was radically expelled from the body. For this reason, modern dance pioneers at the

beginning of the twentieth century re-evaluated the dynamic between the outside and inside of the body. They searched for a different kind of pleasure, connected to the autonomous aesthetic language of the body, which frees itself from the

institutional and disciplinary grip. We can even say that the feeling of modernity and contemporaneity of dance, this disclosure of the kinaesthetic potentiality of the body, was connected to the new kinaesthetic experience of leisure time, to this unknown

and dynamic
transversal outside
work, which is no
longer subjected to the
rational organisation
and instrumentalisation
of movement.

This is where we
come to the core of the
freedom implied in the
emancipatory potential
of dance. In the

conceptualisation of movement in dance reforms, this was the freedom of time without work, the discovery of the potentiality of leisure time as opposed to the dull routine of movement at work. Movement expresses the potential of the

moving relations in the creative time of the non-working subject. This can also be linked with the emerging consumer class, where movement opens to the unexpected, imagination, privacy, chance and flexibility, disclosing its expressive power. In this case,

leisure time also
becomes a time for new
aesthetic experiences.
Contemporary dance
had to develop new
techniques that would
transform this freedom
into a language,
develop the open
virtuosity of the
moving body rather
than the

instrumentalised
product, and open up
spontaneous movement
as aesthetic language
rather than the
scientific naturalisation
of movement. In this
sense, the political and
aesthetic potentiality of
twentieth century
dance was strongly
intertwined with the

exit from the factory.

What represented an expression of freedom in the capitalist societies of the twentieth century was considered a sabotage of society in a different ideological constellation – a representation of obsolete individualism,

unable to adapt to the new transformations of society. I especially have communist countries in mind here, where the image of dancing together functions as a depiction of societies where the dividing line between the factory and private life was erased for

ideological reasons.
Communist systems
adopted all the
movement reforms in
the production and
work process, but with
a different
conceptualisation.

Socialist defenders of
Taylorism (including
Lenin himself)
understood the

scientific management
of work as the
management of the
new society, where the
door between the
factory and private life
would no longer exist.
Beyond even this, there
was a lot of discussion
among Soviet
communists and
Russian avant-gardists

about the hidden potentials of Taylorism and Fordism, which, in their opinion, went unnoticed by the Western capitalists who invented the two. Lenin writes that the Western (capitalist) implementation of Fordism resulted in the alienation of the

workers and an authoritarian organisation of work. Socialist reformers and avant-gardists believed that the new modes of working together could transform society in general. The simultaneous movement of the workers was

understood as a transgressive and transformative poetic form through which the development of a new society could be achieved. This was also the conviction of A.K. Gastev, one of the chief engineers and directors of the Central Institute of Labour in Moscow

(he became director in 1920). Not only did Gastev introduce Taylorist methods in the USSR and develop them further, but was also a famous poet celebrating the new power of industrialised labour and the merging of the human being with the machine. In

his poems, he developed a rhythmical language to describe new production, where the workers would move and transform the entire historical epoch by means of their joint labour.

“When the morning whistles resound over the

workers' suburbs, it is not at all a summons to slavery. It is the song of the future. There was a time when we worked in poor shops and started our work at different hours of the morning. And now, at eight in the morning, the whistles sound for a million men. A million workers seize

the hammers at the same moment.

*Our first blows
thunder in accord. What
is it that the whistles
sing? It is the morning
hymn to unity.”*¹⁴¹

It is well-known that
the movement reforms
of the Russian avant-
gardists (e.g. those of

Meyerhold, Foregger, and partially – in another context – those of Laban) were heavily influenced by the new production process in terms of its abstraction and rationalisation. The aim of movement reforms was to develop an effective gestural language. In other

words, they wanted to develop a new kinaesthetic dynamism that could be achieved by means of the efficient use of gesture and the instrumentalisation of the body. For example, Meyerhold began to rationalize the movement apparatus,

in which the actor's body also became a model for a general optimization of movements. Although his work was closely connected to Gastev's and Taylor's utilitarian production models, Gerald Raunig states that the methods Meyerhold employed

went in another direction: he also wanted to denaturalize theatre.¹⁴² Contrary to the psychology of the plot, the empathetic audience and the singular kinaesthetic experience of the dancing body, which developed an autonomous aesthetic

language in the West
(especially in North
America), the
movement in the
concepts of the Russian
avant-gardists (or
important components
of biomechanics)
consisted of the rhythm
of language and the
rhythm of physical
movement – the

postures and gestures
arising from the
collective rhythms that
coordinated the
movement of the body
and that of the bodies
with one another.

In the twentieth
century, we can
therefore observe two
different relations
between the

conceptualisation of
movement and the
organisation of
production (work
itself). In the so-called
western societies, more
accurately described as
'capitalist', we can
analyse processes of
movement
naturalisation that
opposed the

instrumental use of the working body and the rational organisation of society. This

naturalisation of movement runs in parallel to the discovery of the singular subject, a desiring individual with his/her transversal and transgressive dynamic

movement outside the
modes of production
(metaphorically
speaking, outside the
factory gates). This
individual is mostly
understood as
constantly in
movement and in a
process of continuous
creativity and
autonomous aesthetic

language, an individual who cannot but dance.¹⁴³ Another proposition came through the factory gate – the idea that the modes of production could be intertwined with the transformation of society in general.

The movement of the reforms of the

historical avant-gardes
erased the doorway
between work and
private life; they came
across as kinaesthetic
constructions of future
worlds. In the
movement reforms of
the Russian avant-
gardists and the
European avant-garde
(especially the

Futurists), the
fascination with
industrialised
production modes led
to experiments in the
denaturalisation of
movement, where the
body became a field of
experimentation for a
future social
transformation and an
understanding of future

commonalities. In this, dance and the production process opened the way to the exploration of a new generality of the human being, a generality that comes before any kind of individualisation in the sense of the political generality of the future

that is still to come.

Unfortunately, the discovery of the movement of this generality was an utter failure; it quickly lost its emancipatory political potential and became a totalitarian unity of the communist regime. In capitalist societies, clumsy, still,

expressive, lazy,
dreamy, everyday and
marginal movement is
understood as an
intervention of
liberated singularity; in
communist societies
such movement
sabotages the whole
social machine. In their
utopian pursuance of
the future, communist

societies erased
everything that
radically existed in the
present, cynically
believing that the
future had already
arrived. It is therefore
not surprising that the
communist regimes
actually celebrated the
most conservative and
disciplinary forms of

dance, like massive
gatherings of people or
disciplinary ballet
institutions.

The immense
aesthetic and political
differences in the early
twentieth century must
be connected with the
processes of the radical
interiorisation of
movement at many

different levels,
including the
approaches of
contemporary dance
pioneers. In spite of all
the differences, the
dance pioneers re-
evaluated the dynamic
between the inside and
outside of the body,
with the dance artists
(mostly women)

wanting to liberate movement and bodily expression as a force coming from the inside of the body. In these reforms, human subjectivity became the ultimate source of movement, a source so strong that it could abstract its own body into an autonomous

aesthetic field. In this case, we are talking about the disclosure of inner freedom as a specific kinetic abstraction that can therefore also be connected to the fact that, in the conceptualisation of movement by dance reformers, this freedom

was the freedom of time without work, i.e. the discovery of the potentiality of leisure time as opposed to the dull routine of work movement.¹⁴⁴ This comparison between two conceptualisations of movement, with the political potential of dance in the movement

of the singularity on the one hand, and the discovery of the new (political) generality of the human being on the other (especially in the case of avant-garde conceptualisations), gives rise to a very interesting observation from today's perspective.

We are namely living in a time when the door between the factory and leisure is being erased, when the potentiality of the individual and autonomous creativity are at the centre of production. The movement of this working rhythm is very

different to the description in Gastev's poem, which actually celebrates the disappearance of the factory door. Instead of the synchronised totality of work, which he extols as a new transformation of society and represents with the image of

‘everybody starting at the same time’, the new transformation of today’s society takes place through disharmonious working rhythms, flexible work times and individualised and displaced work. The factory whistle is replaced by free-will

and silent deadlines,
driving people into
many simultaneous and
connected activities in
life and work.
Celebrated throughout
the twentieth century
as the discovery of the
potentiality of freedom,
the movement of the
individual now stands
at the centre of

appropriation; its
affective, linguistic and
desiring aspects are
exploited. We have to
dance in a flawless and
conceptual
diachronicity while
creating the present
and changing places,
times and identities;
this must take place
with speed and with

only short (but not very destructive) outbursts of crisis. This is the new universality of the post-industrial world and its mode of production.

This brings us to *Pontoffel Pock, Where Are You?*¹⁴⁵, a 1979 cartoon by the well-known American

cartoonist and satirical author Dr. Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel). Once again, we chance upon a satirical image of workers dancing together; the working process in a pickle factory is depicted as a harmonious musical. However, one of the new workers, Pontoffel

Pock, is quite a loser – clumsy, disruptive, poor and unhappy. Clumsy by nature and a daydreamer by heart, he tries to push and pull the machine like the other workers; his eagerness to do well destroys the entire factory and he is accompanied to the exit

in disgrace. In his self-pity, he is approached by an angel, who introduces himself as a representative of a global corporation with branches all over the world. As the corporate angel sings, Pontoffel Pocks life is to be pitied and he is offered a magic piano; he only

needs to play a few tones and push the pedals to fly to any exotic destination in the world and experience the most beautiful and exciting adventures. He again causes trouble with his behaviour – due to his unpredictable gestures and movements, due to

his desiring body and to 'always being in the wrong place'. He simply cannot enjoy himself and be spontaneous, but always breaks social relations with his ill-timed actions. This goes on until he finds the love of his life (an Arabian princess) and

gets one more chance at the pickle factory.

The cartoon offers a good example of the shift that took place in the early 1970s and can today be described with the notions of post-industrialism or post-Fordism, especially in connection with the modes of working. The

main characteristics of this shift are great changes in the organisation of production and the role of work, influencing social relations in general. Creative, linguistic and affective work becomes the centre of production. Work is no longer

organised in an
instrumental and
rationalised manner,
behind the factory
door, but becomes part
of the production of
sociality and the
relationships between
people. Creative,
spontaneous, expressive
and inventive
movement, which used

to be excluded from the
denaturalised
movement of the
Fordist machine, is now
at the core of
production. The
essence of
contemporary
production calls for
creative and potential
individuals, with their
constant movement and

dynamism promising
economic value.
Illustrating production
as a form of dancing
together is obsolete
nowadays, also due to
the ineffectiveness of
its social critique.
Today's Fordist
machinery moves away
from visibility to
countries with a cheap

labour force with no escape to leisure, only a brutal exploitation of life in all its aspects. The contemporary post-Fordist worker is no longer part of the rationalised machine, but rather that of affective and flexible networks, with his or her potentiality up for

sale.

However, there exist new forms of dancing together that are much more connected to the kinaesthetic arrangement of everyday life, which is closely connected to the ways in which we live and work today. In 2006, Natalie Bookchin

created a video installation entitled *Mass Ornament*, in which she reflected on the role of mass ornament of today.¹⁴⁶ At the beginning of the twentieth century, the mass ornament functioned as an aesthetic reflex of the rationality of the

prevailing economic system, which I analysed as a rationality that heavily interiorized movement so that the body could effectively produce. So, what could a mass ornament be today?

The question gave rise to the aforementioned work

by Bookchin; she collected hundreds of YouTube videos of people dancing and made them into a synchronous choreography.

Everybody dances alone in his or her own room, usually with a television screen in the background where the

same dance is performed. Bookchin choreographed and composed the recordings on the basis of similar moves, gestures and dances that the dancers had made in private. The result is a peculiar choreographic distribution of bodies

dancing the same dance
or in the same way,
always alone, in private
yet nevertheless in a
public and connected
way. Such

choreographic
distribution could
easily be achieved by
means of a computer
algorithm (if it had the
right parameters like

‘find people dancing to Shakira’s song’, or ‘find people turning their heads in the living room’ etc.). Such automatic selection and combination is actually performed regularly in surveillance centres where recordings of security cameras are analysed.

In comparison to the universal rationality of Fordist production, Bookchin's work creates an ornament of isolated private rooms and the showing-off of bodies exposed in their difference, which is also a difference of radical sameness: a movement where

change is but spectral
and replaced by a
constant quantitative
division of the
differences of those
who are trying to learn
the same popular
dances and show the
same virtuosity.

This tells us that the
exploitation of the
human ability to move

does not have the same ideological constellation today that it had in the disciplinary societies where movement was interiorized so deeply that the body became a kinetic machine, a small but smoothly operating cog in the giant social machine.

The role of movement in post-Fordism has to be analysed in connection with the exploration of everyday movement and ‘what bodies usually do’, i.e. how they move with the world. This not only speeds up and erases the ‘ontological slowness’ and

transformative
potential of bodies, but
creates a radical
incongruity between
the 'movable ones' and
those expelled to
eternal stillness.

If we claim that
movement stands at the
centre of production
and that it is exploited
as human potentiality,

then this also implies that, today, change or alteration is radically abstracted from it. Movement only exists as an accelerated flexibility of contemporary subjectivity. In this way, movement enables freedom as temporal enslavement. We could

say that, due to the appropriation of movement, “productive powers shade into powers of existence.”¹⁴⁷ The non-materiality of contemporary work, its ‘spatial’ independence, is based on the exploitation, or even better, the exhaustion

of these generic human forces – i.e. on the appropriation of movement as one of the forces of life.¹⁴⁸ This means that the production of today is experienced as something spontaneous and flexible, where the process of work is always subject to our

own initiative.

In this sense, we can also understand another image of dancing together, one that has been appearing in recent years in the countries of the post-industrial world – the huge flash mobs organised by corporations and TV

companies. On the surface, these dancers seem to celebrate the spontaneity and affectivity of human relations; what they really celebrate are commercialised joy and spectacular togetherness. It is therefore necessary to rethink the

consequences of the changes in the modes of working for the conceptualisation of contemporary dance, especially if we claim that the political and aesthetic potentiality of dance was discovered in relation to the production process. What would the

consequences for contemporary dance be with these changes in mind? What would the disappearance between work and non-work mean for the relation between dance and freedom, which was always kind of self-evident when reflecting on many dance reforms

of the twentieth century?

First of all, it should not be overlooked that the relationship between dance and freedom no longer has anything to do with resistance to the rigid and disciplinary production modes. Unexpectedness, non-

hierarchical structures,
affectivity and
linguistic/bodily
expressiveness have
entered post-industrial
production and
represent the core of
post-Fordism as the
new organisation of the
production we live in.
The autonomy of
creativity and aesthetic

experience, which was so important when the resistance to the rationalisation of labour first emerged, now represents an important source of production value. We therefore have to observe the relationships between contemporary dance

and the new production modes, which have placed movement and constant flexibility at their centre, along with expressive and spontaneous individual creativity.

Today, subjugation consists of constant movement, flexible relations, signs,

connections, gestures
and a continuous
dispersion outside the
factory gate with the
intention of producing
(and spending) even
more. The production
of today encourages a
constant transformation
and crisis of the
autonomous subject,
with the intention of

capturing that subject's creative outbursts and transmuting them into value. There has to be ceaseless collaboration, temporary but not too affective, otherwise it can become inappropriate and destructive.

In an interview, Paolo Virno describes

the way post-Fordist workers acquire their skills. The qualities of a post-Fordist worker never require skill in the sense of professional expertise or technical requirements. Quite the contrary, what's required is the ability to anticipate

unexpected
opportunities and
coincidences, to seize
chances that present
themselves, and ‘to
move with the world’.
Such skills are not
learnt at one’s
workplace. Nowadays,
workers acquire such
abilities by living in a
big city, gaining

aesthetic experiences,
having social
relationships and
networking.¹⁴⁹

To move with the
world (and attain skills,
knowledge, aesthetic
experience and
collaborative networks
in the process) stands
for specific skills that
are, of course,

connected to cognitive work. To move with the world can also be understood as a specific exploitation of the human abilities of movement. The relational aspect of movement is at the centre of today's exploitation. The movement of the body

is therefore exteriorised; it no longer dwells inside the body as was the case in twentieth century Fordism, where the interiorisation of the movement enabled one to be a part of the larger social machine. Today's subjectivities are flexible because its

bodies are organised by means of constant protocols of the acceleration and organisation of everyday and common movement. This kind of distribution enables experimentation with temporality, whereby change is accelerated and spectral. There is

no time for hesitation
when you move with
the world.

The result is a typical
form of contemporary
subjectivisation or
rather
desubjectivisation,
confronted with the
brutal intensification of
the processes of
individuation, with old

forms of life becoming obsolete even before we are able to absorb them. One is therefore compelled to live in a constant state of tension on the verge of despair. Such intensification would not be possible without the exteriorization of movement, in which

the interrelation of
movement is
continuously
manipulated and
regulated by the
protocols of the
contemporary society
of control. Any
potential for change
dwindles into
ineffective, spectral
flexibility. As a result,

human subjectivity
becomes a source of
many possibilities
without any influence
on reality.

There is something
deeply choreographic
about today's social
machine, which
discloses its own
compositions through
the constant

organisation of
smoothness,
acceleration, non-
disturbance and the
illusion that movement
has nothing to do with
disturbance. The
material for this kind of
social choreography
comes from what
bodies can do: their
everyday mobility and

numerous movements
through numerous
protocols of
transgression, which
are heavily controlled
and regulated. One of
the basic illusions of
the contemporary
subject is that we only
move due to an inner
feeling of time. This
illusion serves as a

basis for constantly
subduing contemporary
subjectivity to
numerous apparatuses
that promise an ever
greater mobility to
defeat our ontological
slowness. The time of
the subject is not a
homogeneous time
projecting into the
future, i.e. a possibility

that constantly needs to be realised. Rather, it is about constantly avoiding obstacles, involuntary movement, and slowness that makes time run out.

This makes contemporary dance a political field where proposals within the human ability to move

can be explored and
connected to the
broader social and
political reality. In this
sense, it needs to bring
together the two
politics of twentieth
century dance: dancing
and walking.
Subversive pleasure
comes from the
distance that the

dancing body has
towards the
institutional
mechanisms of the
exteriorisation of
movement, precisely
because it can dance. In
this sense, the ability to
move can resist the
economic and social
organisation of the
relational aspect of

movement and open up
other embodied ways
of moving together that
continuously create
flows of disturbances
and affective
persistence.

With its various
rhythms, movement
can create tensions and
put pressure on the
seemingly smooth

protocols of the
contemporary
capitalistic world.
Today, this need for the
moving body is quite
apparent in the
changed protest
strategies such as the
'Occupy' movements,
which switched from
disembodied networks
and global movements

to localised but
connected forms of
temporal persistence
and endurance in
certain places – to a
durational search for
new political
embodiments. That is
why this pleasure can
create radical political
disruption even if it
belongs to the

quantitative
organisation and
distribution of bodies.
This pleasure needs to
be linked with the
ability of everyday
movement to induce
change, in the ways in
which we should think
of movement as a
qualitative disturbance,
a constant changing of

the forces of life, a temporal dynamics and materiality of space. This pleasure springs from the fact that movement can induce change, that it can function as an important point of differentiation between spectral change and change that directly

affects the body and its relations to the world.

If this is the case, we need to ask the following important question: what exactly do we do when we work – or more precisely, what do we do when we work with dance? The political potentiality of dance is

not connected to the space outside work, where the body is free to move and disclose its potentiality of being in time and space; it needs to be placed in dialogue with the modes of flexible production and non-material contemporary work.

It is well-known that the production of contemporary dance is becoming flexible today due to constant movement, in which the exchange of forever young and forever experimental artists (a cheap labour force for the increasingly globalised performance

market) goes hand in hand with spectacular shows in order to encourage collaboration for collaboration's sake, and with the continuous movement of the labour force being unavoidable. We tend to forget that there is a materiality to

dance and movement,
not only that of the
body but also that of
time and space. It is not
abstract and does not
rush into the spectral
kinetic flow; it is also
graspable, located,
stuck, partial, rough
and ill-timed. This
materiality resists the
contemporaneity of

time and somehow sabotages the spectral appearance of 'the now'; it gives a different rhythm to the flow of time. This materiality can also be connected to the materiality of work in general; dance is very close to work issues in this sense as well.

Dance is not close to work issues because it can function as a representation of work or an image of the working process, but because it is work in terms of its material rhythms, efforts and the ways in which it inhabits space and time. It is work in the

sense that bodies distribute themselves in space and time, relate to each other and spend or expand their energies. Therefore, the political potentiality of dance should not be searched for in the abstract or democratic idea of freedom and infinite potentiality of

movement, but in the ways in which dance is deeply intertwined with the power and exhaustion of work, with its virtuosity and failure, dependence and autonomy. In that sense, dance practice of the last few decades has been stressing its own ontological

propositions (e.g. dance equals movement; production and collaboration in dance; the relationship between dance and theory).

All these propositions testify to the fact that dance practice is strongly aware of the relationship between

dance and work. If dance is work (and not something opposite to it, in which dance is finally liberated from the materiality of work), then the political potentiality of dance can also be understood as an interesting repetition or replacement of the

avant-garde gesture:
what would the
proposition that dance
is work mean for the
society that is still to
come? Is it possible to
find an alternative to
the continuous
movement and speed,
to the flexibility of
bodies and spaces, to
the dispersion of the

energies and power of
bodies congregating
only due to advertising
campaigns and massive
spectacles?

One of the possible
answers would be the
following: dance can
reveal that kinetic
sensibility not only
flows, but opens up
caesuras, antagonisms

and unbridgeable differences. In this sense, many of the dance performances of the last decade have called for a connection between movement and dance as well as for a broadening of the notion of choreography. Another answer would be that

the materiality of dance
can resist the
abstracted notion of
work and reveal the
problematic connection
between the abstracted
new work modes and
bodies. New work
modes namely have a
tremendous power over
bodies, especially since
they increasingly erase

every representable and
imaginable generality
of bodies. The dancing
body no longer resists
dull working conditions
and does not search for
a new society outside
work; it can have the
power to reveal that
the materiality of
bodies distributed in
time and space can

change the ways we live and work together. This politically and aesthetically transgressive line between work and non-work can open up the potential ways of the society of the future.

4.2. Slowing down

Movement

In order to understand how movement is connected with change and how this opens numerous ways of contemporary perception, it is necessary to think of movement in its relation to time. On

17th November 2007,
in one of their
Ballettika Internettikka
guerrilla actions, which
intervened into various
spaces using robots and
other miniature
mechanical devices for
a decade, and
broadcast these events
online, Igor Štromajer
and Brane Zorman

illegally brought a robot to the top of the famous Lippo Centre in Hong Kong. On the other side of the world, at an equally eminent avant-garde art venue, the Hellerau Festival House in Dresden (Germany), the audience was waiting for the broadcast of this

‘illegal’ guerrilla ballet action, which was scheduled for 10 PM CET. The steps of the action and the schedule of the preparations for the ballet were planned up to the minute, in accordance with the illegal nature of the event. Temporality came second to the

strategic effect of taking over the space and synchronicity served the realization of the planned event.

Through a series of short electronic messages from the two authors, the audience was notified in advance about all the details of the action and the

ascent of the Hong Kong skyscraper, on top of which *Ballettika Internettikka: Stattikka* – an ‘almost static but still transitive net ballet’ was supposed to take place. At 10 PM, giant projections began in the Hellerau Hall. On its walls, ceiling and floor, the image of

the robot appeared. With two red lights as eyes, the robot was situated on a concrete edge made of white ceramic tiles, as though it were just about to take a new step. Behind it, one could see the glittering and rhythmically pulsating lights of the Hong Kong

metropolis, a night without proper darkness. Throughout, there was a sound as though someone were continually changing the (local) radio stations. The length of the transmission was determined in advance: 35 minutes. After the first two minutes, the

head technician in charge of the transmission to the hall skyped the two authors atop the Hong Kong skyscraper: “Hey, is everything ok? When will things start? There’s nothing happening here yet.”¹⁵⁰ The authors replied that everything was

fine. After 35 minutes of transmission, a meticulously scheduled and synchronised descent took place, followed by securing the equipment. The level of risk involved in the action was assessed as the maximum by the two authors.

Indeed, when are

things going to start?
The question of the
technician in charge of
the connection between
Dresden and Hong
Kong was not that of a
person technically
skilled but 'uninformed'
in the field of
contemporary art.
Rather, it mirrored the
increasingly

uncomfortable
atmosphere in the hall;
after a few minutes,
people began to fidget,
walk around and many
actually left the hall.
The artistic director of
the festival, Johannes
Birringer, later
described the various
reactions of the
audience in his blog.

While some people were enthusiastically following the authors' project, others almost meditatively yielded themselves to the transmission on the screens, and still others felt a deep frustration, perhaps even anger, and left the hall in protest. After the

performance,
Birringer's blog also
featured a discussion
between the authors of
the transmission and
some members of the
audience. The general
findings could be
summed up in two
points: a) that not
much happened; and b)
that if the audience had

been more informed about the context of the performance, they might have been more accepting of the 'considerable or complete lack of goings-on'. The reaction of the audience testifies to the fact that duration can be problematic,

especially in a technological context: if duration becomes independent, it needs a context. It needs to be filled with something before its slowness begins to get to us – we simply need to know *why* things have stopped.

Ballettikka

Internettikka: Stattikka could be classified as a networked performance, i.e., a performance that broadcasts a real time and space event over the Internet, which, in *Ballettika's* case, featured a mechanical robot/toy as the main dancer. For these

reasons, the
performance raises
quite a few issues
related to the
relationship between
duration and barely
perceptible movement.
Ballettikka was part of
Tele-Plateaus, a festival
programme that, by
means of broadcasts
from various parts of

the world, attempted to open up a platform for experimentation with synchronous temporalities and reflect on new event concepts established by the relations between technology and performance.¹⁵¹ One might expect that duration, the expansion

of the event, cannot intrigue an audience that is used to performances where the time dimension is heavily experimented with (the perception of time by the audience, etc.). In *Ballettikka Internettikka: Stattikka* something paradoxical takes place. The

connection works and the broadcast is successful, but it seems as though something went wrong; there is duration, but it comes across like a failure; there is slowness, but it seems as though it resulted from some sort of technical malfunction.

Placed on the white-tiled edge with the city view behind it, the robot/toy is not moving, but it is being transmitted. In this way, it embodies the very title of the performance – static ballet. Although the event is broadcast successfully, it seems as

though the connection was not working, and we could quickly begin to feel that this unique ‘non-event’ is wasting our time.

When something does not function (the body, a machine, a car, a computer, a vending machine), the duration literally intervenes into

the subject that witnesses this halt. It seems as though our inner sense of time was appropriated by the non-functioning machine; the subject suddenly feels that he/she has been dispossessed – and needs to slow down and wait. This slowing

down and waiting is frequently felt in contemporary culture when the dispositives that regulate and organize our flexible subjectivities no longer work: for example, the protocols of moving through the city, social networks, airports, motorways, mobile

phones. These kinds of halts in motion or slow-downs have a direct influence on the body as they appropriate the temporality of the subject, organized as endless flexibility, simultaneity and adaptability in today's times. In moments like this, we say that we are

stuck, with little else to do but hang in there and become powerless observers of our own chronological time. According to Agamben, time flies by for observers of their own chronological time; they are never left with any of it and always miss their own

selves.¹⁵² All the dispositives we use to establish ourselves as subjects today promise speed and effectiveness, not only in our actions but also in our subjectivisation processes. The greater the speed promised by the dispositives, the less tolerant and the

more affective our responses become when something remains stationary instead of working. Most of us feel agitated within several seconds when a desired computer programme does not open; we feel like giving the computer a smack, just like we

used to do with the old
televisions when the
image was flickering
and unstable. When
something is stopped, it
seems as though our
subjectivity of the one
stopped will be
disabled, as though it
will be dispossessed.
Perhaps the affective
response is a

consequence of the fact
that it is duration that
shows that we
ourselves are actually
not moving, but are
being moved, that our
inner perception of
time (the time of
someone who freely
and flexibly projects
their own subjectivity)
is in fact heavily

socially and
economically
conditioned.

In many of their
projects, Igor Štromajer
and Brane Zorman
purposefully contrast
mutually exclusive
temporalities. On the
one hand, the almost
‘theatrical’ preparation
for the event (which

cannot be seen during the transmission) gains a classic dramaturgical structure through the constant acceleration and division of the time of the action. On the other hand, the live broadcast of the event is a long way from the accumulated and anticipated effect. The

artists contrast two exclusive temporalities that can also be understood as the two basic inner temporal qualities of the contemporary flexible subject. On the one hand, the subject today is fully subjugated to the concept of accelerated time and

organized through
precise time
management of its
actions and movement;
everything (including
human potentiality) is
organized in time
sequences that are
supposed to lead to a
certain effect. On the
other hand, the inner
time of the subject can

also be described as an escalation of redundant time (time in which we are stuck), slowness, motionlessness, stasis and non-functioning. In this way, *Ballettikka Internettikka: Stattikka* mirrors an interesting dynamic in the contemporary experience of

temporality, where the activity of the subject constantly intertwines with fatigue. At the very moment when the clock begins to tick and the hall is illuminated on the other side of the planet, the investment of the two authors in the event (on both the concrete and

phantasmagorical
levels, which makes the
audience eager in its
expectations) is
flattened into the static
but transitive image of
movement that has
stopped, a still image.
The investment, the
entire preparation for
the event, becomes
consumption without

an effect, a waste of energy and actions to produce an effect that is too slow, a 'lesser effect', so to speak. There is a specific incapability at work in relation to the expectation of what could happen in *Ballettikka*, a specific exhaustion of the event

itself.

This dynamic of action and fatigue could also be compared to the economic relationship between the time of the investment and the time of the consumption. The time of the investment, although flexible and

multi-layered, is also homogenous. Today, time is structured in a projective manner: one needs to achieve an effect and realize future goals. This directly contributes to the (subjective) feeling of time acceleration. At the same time, the consumption of

investments has
become too plentiful
and is downright
redundant. Not only
does it have harmful
effects on our habitat
(natural or social), but
also underlies the
experience of
subjectivity as
redundancy,
dissatisfaction,

insufficient gains, a phantasmagorical waste of energy and resources that brings exhaustion instead of an affirmation of subjectivity.¹⁵³ The subject's crisis therefore springs from this excessive dynamic of investment and consumption, where

the body of the subject is frequently taken over by fatigue, a form of stillness that comes directly from excessive speed: in our culture, speed and slowness seem to be in direct and traumatic opposition. In all its formations, especially those playing with the

contexts of break-in and illegality, *Ballettikka* plays with these feelings of time organization through expectation and the consumption of time – with the expectation of the event and its actual realisation.

Similar feelings are triggered by *NVSBL*

(2007), a dance performance by Eszter Salamon. This is just one of a number of dance performances where movement has been reduced to a minimum; it has analogous qualities to the unsuccessful movement of the robot in the video projected

in the Hellerau Hall. It is true that this performance features the barely perceptible movement of live bodies; however, there is something comparable in the way in which the bodies are slowed down inside a decelerated image, as they would be if

recorded in slow motion. The title of the performance is deliberately without consonants; the word itself resembles the movement in an image broadcast with a delay effect. Very slowly, four dancers appear from the background, motionless and yet

moving. Their bodies seem to slide from one flickering image to another, but cannot actually be retained in the memory. A comparison could easily be made with a broadcast where the image is unstable, delayed and the transmission is not

functioning properly.

The performance, which is difficult to describe without reducing it to the logic of the events, has been captured by the philosopher Cristina Demaria in the following way: “On stage we watch the imperceptible and

therefore invisible
movements of four
dancers who emerge
very slowly from a dark
background: with their
bodies, and with a
miraculous play of
lights, they are not so
much composing
figures as being figures,
apparently motionless
but actually changing.

Figures that become channels of a 'logic of sensation' (Deleuze), at times also laboriously alienating for a public accustomed to seeing and therefore judging what it manages to interpret ('But nothing's happening here,' said a woman in front of me, fidgeting

nervously in her seat). It is a logic capable of restoring our thought of the body as a force at once precise and devastating and also, quite simply, beautiful, like the beauty associated with certain paintings that continually come to mind as we try to

watch NVSBL. The power of this thought is demonstrated by such a reduction of movement in space as to render the very reality of the bodies inaccessible, because it deprives us of control over our own perception and consequently of presumed control over

bodies which our vision
believed it could frame
and interpret with its
own memory
models.”¹⁵⁴ This
description is close to
what I would define as
the potentiality of
duration: the reduction
and absence of
movement are so
radical that they

shatter the reality of the bodies and, at the same time, dispossess our perception.

Time becomes independent when it does not allow us to fill emptiness with meaning. In this performance, the images are structured in such a way that they

do not allow us to focus on anything and retain things in our memory; time is so redundant that it takes control over our perception. The consequence of this temporal redundancy is the dispossession of our inner sense of time, whereby our attention no longer empowers

our subjective
experience. Quite the
opposite: we are stuck,
duration disables us, it
takes over. When we
are overwhelmed with
a redundancy of time,
duration does not
stimulate our attention
and does not enable a
more intense awareness
of the subject.

Attention becomes rather impersonal, as described by Blanchot: “It is not the self that is attentive in attention; rather, with an extreme delicacy and through insensible, constant contacts, attention has always already detached me from myself, freeing me for

the attention that I for an instant become.”¹⁵⁵

This is why duration does not stimulate our attention, activate us and make us more sensitive and open – more self-aware.

Duration has nothing to do with tension. Quite the opposite is the case: during redundant time

that is running out, we are stuck, with our attention waiting.

It is only when we approach duration as something that is related to the dispossession of subjectivity that it can be discussed as a potentially critical concept in

contemporary culture.
The two
aforementioned works
help us gain an insight
into the current
cultural and political
dimensions of duration,
which have different
critical properties than
the experiments with
duration and
temporality in the

second half of the twentieth century.

In contemporary theatre, the stretching of time has long been at the forefront. For example, Lehmann writes that, in contemporary theatre, we often no longer speak of the representation of the

timeline, but about the presentation in its own temporality. Duration in theatre does not portray duration; in other words; when the performance slows down, the slowness on stage does not refer to the slowness of the fictitious universe, which is supposed to

fuse with our own
experiential world.
Temporality becomes
an immanent
'conscious' element of
the performance, by
means of which theatre
refers to its own
process. This means
that the experience of
time expansion and,
consequently, the

various strategies for organizing the spectator's diffused perception are at the forefront. Theatre takes place and is organised in the gap between its fictitious time and the time of the audience.¹⁵⁶ Instead of representing homogenous time (dramatic time, the

time of the subject, the time of the event, etc.), contemporary theatre takes place as a heterogeneity of temporalities, where a coherent temporality no longer exists. The performances experiment with time and the attention of the spectator; they break

up the sequence and coherence of the events, experiment with memories and things that are yet to come, with repetition, with phenomenological experience, etc.

In this way, theatre has frequently been understood as the artistic field that defies

the strict
rationalization and
effectiveness of
homogenous time in
contemporary capitalist
society, enabling the
parallel and
heterogeneous
experience of attention,
and revealing the
incoherence of the
subject (e.g. Lehmann).

When the temporal experience of the subject cannot be embraced as a coherent unit, but as a flexible, heterogeneous and contradictory one, the subject cannot be subjugated by the social organizational structures and the subject's experience of

time is not subdued into effectiveness. In this way, contemporary performance seems to offer resistance to the social division of time and the understanding of time as a means of economic effectiveness (where time is considered as economic value). As Adrian

Heathfield writes, the theatre experiments of the early 1970s that introduce duration by means of various procedures (repetition, the expansion of the performance beyond the cultural convention, improvisation, coincidence and the non-materiality of the

event) establish a critical understanding of time as a commodity and create unassailable values that cannot be subjugated by the existing social and cultural constructions of time, where time is closely connected to the effectiveness and rationalization of the

social systems.¹⁵⁷

In the early 1970s, when theatre experiments brought duration into performance by means of various procedures, changes began to take place in the manner of subjectivisation in the wider social and cultural spheres that

could be linked with emerging post-industrial society. The changes were connected with what was discussed by the Italian philosophers who detected deep changes in social organization. The difference between work and free time is

disappearing; the
communicative and
linguistic dimension is
at the forefront; human
potentiality is at the
core of production. The
power of production
becomes the thing that
establishes us as human
beings, as potent
beings. This shift causes
important changes in

social organization and the cultural concepts of time.

Experimenting with time (simultaneousness, heterogeneity, synchronicity) is at the forefront, accompanied by play with time compression, crisis and release (both on the personal and social

levels). Experimenting with time serves to enhance the effectiveness and production value of the subject, as well as the value of virtual predictions and projections (not only in the financial market, but also in social structures). As

contradictory as it may sound, experimenting with time is what contributes to the subduing of the contemporary flexible subject. Time

experimentation is an essential condition for the value of work itself.

Let's try to find evidence for this

argument in
contemporary artistic
and cultural
production. Most of
those active in this field
are involved with
projecting projects and
realizing those
projected projects. The
time dimension is
already contained in
the term 'project':

actions in the future,
the actualisation of
possibilities, etc.
Despite the fact that
experimenting and
constant movement is
at their core, projects
are simultaneously part
of a homogenous
temporality that we
feel as an intense
acceleration at both the

intimate and social
levels. The
heterogeneous
character of projects,
which involve
exceptional human
abilities, belong to an
all-embracing
homogenous
temporality that does
not enable a different
social model of

organization even though, paradoxically, it needs to constantly invent them in order for the project to succeed.¹⁵⁸

My question would therefore be as follows: what is the critical value of duration in the post-industrial situation, where the

inner feeling of the
subject increasingly
fuses with the value of
his/her productivity
and where the
heterogeneity of
temporality is at the
core of shaping
contemporary
subjectivity? What is
the critical value of
duration if the

heterogeneity of time is part of the subduing of the subject, the appropriation of the subject's worth by the economy?

I see an essential difference in the following fact. A few decades ago, duration could be understood as a sort of visibility of

activity (process,
structure, immediacy,
failure, coincidence,
redundancy), and a
way to manage the
attention of the
spectator and her/his
sensibility. In the
second half of the
twentieth century,
duration is therefore
closely connected to

the entry of work into the performance itself (e.g. improvisation in dance, where decisions are made in the present and the work is not hidden behind the dancing body) and to the emancipation of the performance process. Interestingly, this entry and visibility of work

processes in the
performance runs
parallel to the new
methods of post-
industrial production,
where work is no
longer Fordist as a rule,
but increasingly
virtuosic. It takes place
before others, i.e. the
audience, and acquires
increasingly

communicative
features.

Today, due to
changes in the inner
perception of time,
which is so closely
connected with the
contemporary
dispositives of multi-
temporality,
heterogeneity and
flexibility, I feel that

we need to think in the direction of duration as a dispossession that overwhelms us with non-functioning and non-operativity. In order for the subjects to last, they need to be literally dispossessed, forget themselves as a subject.¹⁵⁹ This is why even short time units

can have a very long duration today. Due to the accelerated and projective character of our inner time, subjects find themselves in a no man's land if something does not function or if nothing is going on; they feel as though the duration intrudes upon them and,

paradoxically, steals
the most intimate time.

Duration, gives
nothing in return; it
does not sharpen our
senses and nor do we
acquire a different
sensibility or
intensiveness by
yielding to it. Duration
does not activate us; it
only dispossesses us

and fails to catch our attention. In the two aforementioned performances, duration does not cause sublime effects; if the performances do not irritate us so much that we leave immediately, we are suddenly stuck. We sit there in the midst of the

performance and do not surrender to its flow, only try and get through it as though it were an obstacle, actually having to move through it step by step. Our attention waits “without precipitation, leaving empty what is empty and keeping our haste,

our impatient desire, and, even more, our horror of emptiness from prematurely filling it up.”¹⁶⁰

Culturally, duration can be deeply subversive, but not because it contrasts the experience of slowness with the experience of speed (after all, slow

movement is a privilege of the rich and an inevitable for the poor). Duration irritates us because it can reveal how deeply our most intimate perception of time (i.e. the feeling that we are active beings and constantly on the move) is socially constructed and

economically
conditioned. For this
reason, duration
demolishes social and
organisation protocols;
the time we have needs
to dispossess us in
order for us to be able
to last. Since our daily
life calls for ubiquitous
and constant
actualisation, duration

does not enable actualisation, but quite the opposite. It places us into a state of pure potentiality, into what is still supposed to come. While lasting, we wait for time to run out. This dispossession through duration is not only characteristic of contemporary art; we

can trace it in the arts to the 1960s onwards, where duration is at the forefront of numerous artistic experiments of live art, performance and film.¹⁶¹

By experimenting with duration and movement, the two performances I have described open up the

problematics of
dispossession, not
because nothing is
happening, but because
the redundant time
generated interferes
heavily with the inner
processes of
subjectivisation: we are
suddenly left with time,
which means that being
is potentially possible

without self-actualization. This description also has concrete political and cultural implications. Slow observation that does not concentrate upon the actual effect, the dispossession in which we create something before it actually happens,

characterises the manner of working in contemporary theatre and dance. This is especially true if performance is understood as the field of experimenting with and critically addressing the social and economic contexts in which we live and

work. Duration also directly sabotages the organization of the social protocols of flexibility and mobility, especially when we are speaking of duration as a specific relationship with movement. Contrastingly, continuous and accelerated movement

(described by Sloterdijk as kinetic modernity)¹⁶², expels any kind of potency from the actualisation of the subject: professions need to be changed quickly, everything needs to be made usable, the future needs to be organized into a projection.

Duration reveals that movement does not only belong to the activity of the subject; we only begin to last when moved by others – when we have been placed into the world.

Finally, let me illustrate the concept of duration with one more image, a personal one

from my former home city. It is an image of the view from the window of one of my previous homes. I lived near an old people's home, whose residents took walks in a small circular park, where one could do little but repeat the path over and over. Whenever I

looked at the park
through my window, I
felt that something had
changed in my
perception of time. In
the clamour of the city,
a movement was
revealed that could be
looked at without a
kinaesthetic feeling
being triggered in my
body. The duration of

the people's walks
shows itself as the
slowness of the body no
longer capable of the
continuous and
invisible transition of
the city inhabitant.
However, the walks the
old people take always
confirm to me that
movement is not only
about crossing a space,

getting from point A to point B. This is also discussed by Deleuze: “Movement is not a unity of quantitative differences that can be endlessly multiplied.”¹⁶³

Such is our global movement of today. Our subjectivity is organised as a unity of

quantitative differences
marked by an endless
acceleration of the
numeric differences
between the places we
have visited, the
residences we have
inhabited and the
people we are
connected with.
Movement is not only a
transient movement in

space, but should also be understood as change, as quantitative differentiation. For example, Deleuze refers to the eminent philosophical parable of the fearless runner Achilles; despite his youth and strength, his movement resembles that of the old people

in the park, who would represent the turtle in this parable. It is not about equal speed, but about an equal mode of duration. Achilles's movement can be quantitatively divided into steps; with every step, the movement changes in a qualitative way. Deleuze says:

“What seems from the outside to be a numerical part, a component of the run, turns out to be, experienced from the inside, an obstacle avoided.”¹⁶⁴ The inner perception of movement is therefore quantitative and enables change,

precisely because
movement concerns us
from the outside.

The interesting thing
about those no longer
young bodies taking
their walks might be
precisely that the
experience of
movement as
qualitative change
shows on the surface of

the body. Movement is a relationship. It constantly dispossesses us by means of obstacles that we cannot react to if we wish to move. One of the basic illusions of the contemporary subject is that we only move because of our inner feeling of time.

This illusion also serves as a basis for constantly subduing contemporary subjectivity to an increasing number of dispositives that promise even greater mobility to defeat our ontological slowness.

The time of the subject is therefore not a homogenous

projecting time, a possibility that constantly needs to be realised. Rather, it is constantly avoiding obstacles, involuntary movement, a slowness in which time itself is running out. The German anthropologist and philosopher Odo Marquard writes that

the obsession with speed in contemporary culture can also be understood as an incessant acceleration of the speed of life, a response to the ontological fact of the shortness of human life. Marquard claims that, in comparison to death, all human life is

fundamentally slow.
Only in this way can
we bear the shortness
of human life in
comparison to the
world around it, the
fact that we are but a
“niche in time”.¹⁶⁵
Human beings need to
have a sense of
slowness because this is
the only way to

differentiate those
changes that are
desired and possible.
Maybe that's why the
relation between
duration and
movement is so
important: it enables a
waiting in which we
look at something that
is not yet there.

Chapter 5

The Visibility of Work

5.1. The Artist as a Virtuoso

A few years ago, the Belgian philosopher Dieter Lesage was invited to collaborate

with the artist Ina Wudtke on writing an introductory text for her catalogue. Lesage took the invitation seriously; rather than describing her artistic “products”, his “*Portrait of the Artist as a Worker*” meticulously describes what Wudtke actually does when she

works as an artist. “You are an artist and that means: you don’t do it for the money. That is what some people think. It is a great excuse not to pay you for all the things you do. So what happens is that you, as an artist, put money into projects that others will show in

their museum, in their
Kunsthalle, in their
exhibition space, in
their gallery. So you
are an investor. You
give loans nobody will
repay you. You take
financial risks. You
speculate on yourself as
an artistic asset. You
are a trader. You
cannot put all your

money into one kind of
artistic stock. So you
diversify your
activities. You manage
the risks you take. You
would say it differently.
I know. You say you
suffer from a gentle
schizophrenia. You
have multiple
personalities. You are a
photographer, but also

a DJ. You have a magazine, you are a publisher, but you also organize parties. You take photos of party people. You throw a party when you present a magazine, you make magazines with photographs of party people, you throw a party and you are the

DJ. You do interviews with people you meet, you do interviews with people you would like to meet, you tell the people you meet about your magazine. You buy records on flea markets, you distribute flyers announcing parties in the bar where you have a coffee after

visiting the flea market,
you make videos
recording how you
destroy the records you
bought on the flea
market, you liberate
your country from its
bad music, you show
the video in a gallery
and you are a DJ at the
vernissage.”¹⁶⁶

By meticulously

enumerating her
multiple activities,
which move between
organization,
production,
dissemination,
networking, the
presentation of the
artwork and the artist
herself, in a fast
repetitive rhythm,
Lesage directly

indicates the profound changes in the work of the contemporary artist that have been taking place over the last few decades. By shifting the focus from *artistic work* to *the artist's work*, i.e. from aesthetic or philosophical reflection on the work to its actual production,

Lesage not only attempts to draw attention to what the artist has to do as an artist, but also to show that the manner in which artists work is strongly intertwined with the way artistic work is valued and recognized today. He shows that the open,

interdisciplinary,
unstable and flexible
character of
contemporary artistic
work is not only an
aesthetic quality but
one deeply connected
to the ways how the
works are produced.

Ina Wudtke moves
between various
production activities,

changes the methods of
creating, makes
recordings, holds
meetings, writes
presentation materials,
edits applications, re-
records things, takes
presentation photos,
holds some more
meetings, organizes
parties, transgresses
between numerous

project preparations
and realizations. Her
work is highly flexible
and mobile, taking
place simultaneously at
different levels. It is
impossible to
differentiate between
her artistic work and its
presentation, between
the making of the work
and its public

dissemination, or
between the materiality
and non-materiality of
the artistic work. It is
also impossible to draw
a line between her
numerous activities,
her professional and
private lives, the
creation and
organization of her
work, the creativity and

advertising of her work,
or her work and her
pleasure. All her
activities are united
into a single all-
encompassing current
flowing cyclically
through Lesage's
meticulous description
of every single 'banal
detail' of her work.

Ina Wudtke's portrait

is that of a top-notch virtuoso. Not only does she create virtuosic work, her performance of the work surrounding the artistic work is virtuosic as well. She is a virtuoso in *the way* she works. Her portrait reveals a top-notch virtuosity in all the aspects and

nuances of her work as a contemporary artist. Lesage compares her virtuosity to that of a DJ, and this comparison is not coincidental. Ina Wudtke actually works as a DJ and a visual artist; this makes her work comparable to that of other

performing artists, e.g. musicians, actors and speakers, whose work is virtuosic due to the absence of a final product. The aim of their activities is not the creation of a product, but the performance itself. Furthermore, Wudtke's work always takes

place before the eyes of other people, in the presence of an audience. Her virtuosity is about performing a specific 'score', which not only includes her 'musical work' but her activities in their entirety. In this sense, her activities can be viewed as a

corroboration of Paolo Virno's thesis that, in a post-Fordist society, activity without an end product becomes the prototype of any kind of wage work. Contemporary post-Fordist work is predominantly of a communication and linguistic type, taking

place continuously before the eyes of others, which adds a basic political trait to its character.¹⁶⁷

A number of Wudtke's activities are connected to this visibility of work and to the work taking place before the eyes of the audience; this goes

for both her non-artistic and her artistic work, which cannot be clearly differentiated. The virtuosity does not only apply to creating music or visual installations; highlighted in Lesage's description is another activity, that of rendering DJ

procedures (sampling,
recombination,
remixing and other
music creation
processes) into
transgression between
various qualities and
forms of immaterial
work: creation by
means of materials,
communication,
presentation materials,

meetings, exchange,
collaboration,
reflection, travelling,
recording, re-recording,
selling, advertising,
project planning etc.

In this way, Lesage
also differs from
Bourriaud's claim about
the artist as a
contemporary DJ who
rhetorically translates

these procedures into the reuse of forms and a reprogramming of the procedures through which today's artistic works supposedly intermediate between forms, signs and images.¹⁶⁸ Ina Wudtke's portrait shows that the artist is actually an ideal

virtuoso of
contemporary post-
Fordist work; indeed,
she demonstrates top-
notch skills in its
various aspects
(flexibility, mobility,
performativity,
simultaneity,
impermanence).
Despite the fact that
her work belongs to the

post-Fordist way of working, her work is highly repetitive and ceaseless, i.e. similar to the Fordist assembly line in terms of rhythm. Lesage indicates the complex status of contemporary virtuosity which, also according to Virno, characterizes the entire

social production of today; the most important aspect of social production are the linguistic and communicative performances, in which the aforementioned score is just that of general intellect (in terms of the general human faculty of

communication and community building). “Nobody is as poor as those who see their own relation to the presence of others, that is to say, their own communicative faculty, their own possession of a language, reduced to wage labor.”¹⁶⁹

If we wish to delve

deeper into the topical
closeness of art and
capitalism, we
therefore need to focus
on *visibility*, an
important characteristic
of today's artistic work.
The vanishing dividing
line between artistic
work and work itself
needs to be rethought;
in many artistic

practices, this
phenomenon is
connected to the
disappearing dividing
line between life and
art. In the continuation,
I will show that the
artist in contemporary
society has become a
prototype of the
contemporary flexible
and precarious worker

because the artist's work is connected to the production of life itself – in other words, with the production of subjectivity and the excess of sociality as discussed in previous chapters.

Today, the vanishing dividing line between life and work, placed

by many twentieth-century artists at the core of their emancipation tendencies is also at the centre of the capitalist processes of life exploitation. It often seems that the artist is the ideal worker in contemporary capitalism; it is also no

coincidence that the artistic lifestyle and the exploitation of life as an endless creative process underlie the speculation on the future value of art. Contemporary artistic subjectivity enters the critical analyses of post-Fordist capitalist culture due to the

disappearance of the borders between the 'artistic work' and the way the work is made: placed at the forefront is the immateriality of artistic work, its event-related and relational component, where the borders between the process and the product become blurred.

Notably, there is a contradiction in all this: the procedures of bringing art and life closer together (in the twentieth century, their main aim was to open the emancipation potential of art and to shift the focus to the process of creation by detaching from the

materiality of the artistic object) are now at the core of the capitalist creation of value.

Interestingly, numerous theatrical and dance performances of the last few decades have thematised their own work procedures,

which have often been viewed as an expansion of the artistic field itself (choreography, dance, performance art) moving the traditional borders of art. This has been especially true of European contemporary dance since the 1990s; the field has been strongly

marked by the introduction of the visibility of the labour itself, especially aspects not necessarily connected to physical endeavours but with the new affective atmospheres and energetic tensions of work. These new work procedures have indeed

been able to bridge the traditional role hierarchies (e.g. the relationship between the choreographer and the dancer, between the artist and the institution, etc.) and contribute to broadening the perspective in terms of what specifically

artistic practices can still become (what dance can be, what the body can do); they have also contributed to changing the artistic institutions into more community- and experiment-oriented spaces. Nevertheless, these new work procedures have also

been closely connected with new post-Fordist ways of production. This is why it is necessary to rethink the ‘political traits’ of the new ways of working and point out the contradictions of the flexible, non-material processes in art – especially the ways in

which the visibility of work is part of contemporary processes of work exploitation.

Discussions on the closeness of artistic and capitalist work already began at the end of the 1990s, especially under the influence of Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, whose book

The New Spirit of Capitalism highlights the similarities between artistic subjectivity and the subjectivity of contemporary capitalism.¹⁷⁰

Frequently understood as the ideal subjectivity of contemporary capitalism, especially in connection with the

rise of the creative class, artistic subjectivity is by no means lazy and inactive; quite the opposite, it is incessantly active in all its possible forms and in the realization of its potentiality. According to Boltanski and Chiapello, autonomy,

self-realization,
creativity and the
disappearance of the
difference between
work time and private
time are characteristics
of contemporary
creative work at the
core of the new spirit of
capitalism.

The authors analyse
the powerlessness and

collapse of institutional
art criticism, which
arose from the
emancipation
tendencies in the 1960s
and the affirmation of
the shift after 1968. In
their opinion, one of
the reasons for the
powerlessness of art
criticism after the
1960s was the consent

to and contentment
with the changes that
introduced the
management concepts
of flexibility, mobile
creativity, the open
process and creative
participation into the
ways of working, and
which placed an
emphasis on the
linguistic and

performative
dimensions of the
working process. We
could therefore
conclude that many
contemporary
characteristics of the
creative artistic
processes (openness,
exploration, the
increasing closeness of
art and life) can also be

found in the new work processes that appeared along with post-Fordism. The exploitation of potentiality, communication abilities and flexibility (constant availability) of the working subject, the entry of virtuosity into the workplace, the

vanishing difference
between work and free
time, the increase in
the performative ability
of the contemporary
worker – all this
intertwines with the
projective creation of
new forms and
contexts, as well as
with the performative
orientation of every

segment of work.¹⁷¹

Located at the core of contemporary work is visible work (labour), performed before the eyes of other people. Consequently, every evaluation and judgment of work is connected to this visible core, to experimentation and

the development of the
subject's linguistic,
affective and
imaginative abilities.
The visibility of work is
closely connected to
what Virno describes as
the increasing closeness
of work and political
activity. This visibility
of work is also at the
heart of the

managerial, unfinished
(projective) nature and
openness of work; here
aesthetic characteristics
of work and their
appropriation by
contemporary
production processes
are closely intertwined.

Let's return to Ina
Wudtke's portrait. Her
work is open,

processual, precarious
and continually moving
between different
activities; this is not
only true of her
‘bureaucratic and
managerial work’, but
also of her artistic
work, which is closely
connected to its
production apparatus.
This apparatus is

abstract in the sense that immateriality is a trait of both the artistic work and the work process. The process is primarily geared towards what the work could be, aiming for the exchange of the potentiality of work (the production of contexts, meanings,

transfers etc.); the work takes place in the form of speculation on the work itself.¹⁷² As an artist, Ina Wudtke must be constantly networking, she has to be communicative and virtuosic; she must be skilled at numerous creative ways of making her work

visible. It is through this process that her artistic work is created in the first place.

Lesage therefore points out that there is an interesting economic connection between her labour and artistic work, one calling for artistic work to be analysed together with

its production: in fact, this is the only way in which an aesthetic analysis of artistic work can actually be made. The production of artistic work concerns the open and creative processes that can take place parallel to the radical exploitation of the work in general. It

is not so much about the analysis of the institutional working conditions, but about the ways in how the art work is actually produced.

Contemporary artistic institutions are also part of this flexibility and speculation with work,

with even the most
progressive ones
collaborating in the
exploitation of a poorly
paid and flexible work
force; even the most
self-critical artistic
institutions actually
generate the same
economic and social
models that they
criticize in their works.

The artistic decisions, methods and aesthetic traits of the artistic work are closely connected to its production conditions; the way we work is deeply ingrained in the form of our artistic work. Artistic institutions like to consider themselves

progressive, but many of them are only able to survive due to the exploitation of flexible and non-paid work; the organization apparatus/bureaucratic management is actually organized as a series of internships, residences and extensions of endless education.

Frequently, this free, precarious, barely paid and flexible work sees no difference between free time and working time. This work is surrounded by a certain social aura in terms of the symbolic value of the artistic institution as a parallel social space, the friendship

between its actors and the value of this 'artistic' life in general. This does not mean that institutions need to be moralistically condemned as bad. Their framing within contemporary economic methods of production does need to be noted: they do

exist as an important and active part of the shift into precarious and flexible work, in which they also support the affective construction of the precarious understanding of subjectivity.

The functioning of artistic institutions is

thus closely connected to the omnipresent feeling of precariousness. Lauren Berlant characterizes this precariousness not only as economic but as structural and thus typical of the contemporary affective environment we live in.¹⁷³ In her opinion,

this kind of structural precariousness marks the experience of the present moment as well as the atmospheres and rhythms of contemporary life.

The functioning of many contemporary artistic institutions should be read in the light of this affective

shift, which hails
creativity and
temporary freedom as
essential but also gives
rise to an increasing
feeling of
powerlessness and
instability. According
to Berlant, this affective
feeling consists of the
simultaneous
frustration and free

delight felt by the
educated but rather
rarely employed
intellectual classes.
These classes are
characterized by
constant mobility,
network building and
insistence that they are
at the centre rather
than on the margin of
the social. They are

characterized by a rhetoric of care for others and the new social ecology, demanding that the state guarantee the basic conditions for the flourishing of their work and mobility (food, clothing, shelter, employment), without any of them having to

renounce the flexible,
migratory and unstable
way of life they have
fought out for
themselves.¹⁷⁴ This
description reminds me
of the feeling
frequently present at
the core of
contemporary artistic
subjectivity, which also
develops a new social

ecology of giving and
friendship in order to
be able to persist in the
precarious and
unbearable instability
of such life in which it
closely participates: in
the omnipresent
affective shift and the
exploitation of
subjectivity. The
progressiveness of the

institutions should
therefore be connected
to these deeply
affective and intimate
working conditions;
this would directly
influence the structure
and functioning of the
institutions and
transform the value of
our investment into
them. Instead of an

abstract aura of
friendship, the
institutions should
develop forms of
solidarity and
permanence of work;
they should not allow
the same work
conditions as elsewhere
and worsen the
contemporary affective
climate.

We are dealing with the ambivalent status of the contemporary artist and their work, a status closely connected to the post-Fordist ways of working and cultural production. In the opinion of some authors, the artist becomes the ideal worker for

contemporary
capitalism; the artist is
actually supposed to
serve as the basis on
which the
contemporary
fetishisation of
creativity and creative
neoliberal flexible
subjectivity should be
modelled. Indeed, the
great majority of

contemporary artistic
practices adopt an
extremely critical
stance towards
creativity; instead, they
establish various
processes of
collaboration that move
away from modernist
artistic subjectivity.
Despite the resistance,
these processes also

exist as part of post-Fordist work condition, especially due to their inherent communicativeness: contemporary works are primarily established as discursive, performative and intercommunication fields.

It is not only about work becoming a theme; the visibility of work changes the relationship with the audience, which cooperates in its open procedures. Today, many artistic works exist as communication fields enabling the exchange of knowledge

and feelings, where it is possible to enter things (work in progress) that are yet unfinished (and thus shoulder one's part/responsibility), and test the closeness and value of what gets produced. This is why a lot of artistic works include the spectator, who collaborates in the

production of a work
by working with
his/her own
communicative, social
and production
abilities.¹⁷⁵ At the same
time, the omnipresent
feeling of the precarity
and prevalence of non-
material work
establishes a series of
symptoms within the

contemporary way of working, which also affects the understanding of artistic subjectivity.

For example, Vassilis Tsianos and Dimitris Papadopoulos state a number of neurotic symptoms that fit in well with the ways artistic subjectivity is

understood and felt
today: vulnerability
(the feeling of
flexibility without any
kind of form of
security), hyperactivity
(the imperative to keep
up with constant
accessibility),
simultaneity (the
ability to keep up the
various rhythms and

speeds of various simultaneous activities), recombination (transgressing between different networks/social spaces), post-sexuality and fluent intimacy (the bodily production of indeterminate sexual relations), anxiousness

(connected to communication and interaction overload), cunningness (the ability to employ opportunism and tricks) and affective exhaustion (emotional exploitation).¹⁷⁶

In artistic work, the visibility of work is also connected to the ways

in which the
production of
communication,
relationships, relations,
affects and non-
material goods drives
out post-Fordist
production (or places it
into the hidden and
closed zones of the
'invisible' world).¹⁷⁷
Today, many artistic

practices face the old but extremely important dilemma indicated by Walter Benjamin in his 1934 lecture *The Author as Producer*. In this essay, Benjamin deals with the issues surrounding the relationship between artistic work and social situation – in

other words, how and whether artistic work should respond to the specific social situation in which it is generated: what the relationship should be between its tendency and quality. The eminent answer to this question is given at the very beginning of the

text; Benjamin writes that “the correct political tendency includes a literary tendency.”¹⁷⁸

The political is therefore also the aesthetic, where the aesthetic in the political should not be understood as a consequence of the

‘right’ relationship of art to the production relations of its time (this is not about whether artistic work is reactionary or progressive), but especially as the question of how artistic work is placed within the production relations of its time:

“Before I ask: how does a literary work stand in relation to the production of a period, I would like to ask: how does it stand in them? This question aims directly at the function that the work has within the literary relationship of production of a period.

In other words, it aims directly at a work's technique (Technik).”¹⁷⁹

Benjamin's notion of technique refers primarily to the aesthetic quality of work, which is also closely connected to the production process and thus comes close to

the notion of technology – i.e. the manner in which the work is produced, its method of production. Benjamin's notion of technique opens the door to direct social analysis and enables materialist analysis of artistic works; at the same time, it

dialectically cuts in the sterile opposition between tendency and quality (form and content).

Extremely important for our analysis is the fact that the artistic work must explore the ways in which it is produced – in the case of contemporary art,

that would be the post-Fordist (open, flexible, communicative, affective) methods that separate the work from the materiality of the working process. Due to the ‘seeming’ immateriality of contemporary artistic work, there are numerous artistic

works with a revolutionary attitude today that have not really thought through their work or its technique in a truly revolutionary manner.¹⁸⁰

Today, when the methods of production are literally fused with the work itself, when the

flexibility and
communicativeness of
the work processes
transgress into the
openness of work, and
when the exploitation
of creativity overlaps
with experimentation
and research, the artist
has actually been called
upon to constantly
revolutionise the

methods of his/her own production.

As a producer, the artist is namely skilled at numerous creative and production techniques that go hand in hand with the development of contemporary capitalism. The revolutionizing and

changing of these
methods is also
connected to the
immateriality,
abstraction and
ephemerality of his
work – the traits that
actually separate work
from materiality and
the visible processes of
practice that are
essential in the

production of artistic work. The visibility of artistic work becomes the principal technology of its production, and should be connected to the material and embodied processes that actually enable this visibility. Frequently, the visibility is possible due

to the precariousness,
flexibility and
inconstancy of work in
general, due to the
fetishisation of non-
material and
speculative experience
as the basic social and
communicative
experience that can be
enabled by artistic
work. Therefore it is

important for artistic practice to return back to the material aspect of work, to the sensuous and material base of any activity.

5.2. The Female Artist between Work and Life

The artistic work

reveals that its
politicisation – on the
border between life and
work, non-work and
work, and production
and reproduction – has
been made very
difficult today because
the basic contemporary
hegemonic
representation of work
is that of the

disappearance of this difference, with artistic subjectivity becoming the central image of this fusion. Artistic subjectivity is actually the most efficient representation of the disappearance of this difference.¹⁸¹ This does not mean that this difference does not

exist and still
determines
contemporary
subjectivity.

“Although the
economic field, in a
double sense, mobilizes
and controls the social
realm, the paradigms of
capitalist production
remain the same. They
do not inform the

resources of our social
lives themselves, even
(and especially) if
cognitive capitalism
has parasitically
positioned itself at the
side of reproduction.
Acceleration and
maximizing profit
continue to be
advanced as the
necessary logic of the

market. Life itself is subsumed under the rules of efficiency and optimization that were first encountered under the regime of automated industrial work in order to synchronize the body with machines. Today, it is our cognitive capabilities that we are

expected to optimize and our self-relation (to our work) that we are expected to correct in the interest of lifelong learning”¹⁸²

According to Marion Von Osten, the politicisation of this difference between life and work has frequently interested

feminist artists, who have paid special attention to this difference due to the nature of their work (e.g. the difference between professional, care and motherhood-related work, or public social work and private household work). As an early example of

radical critique of the disappearance of this border, her text *Irene is Many* (*Irene ist Viele*) analyses *The All Round Reduced Personality: Outtakes* (*Redupers: Die Allseitig Reduzierte Persönlichkeit*), a film by the German feminist artist Helke Sander from 1978.

Helke Sander's movie depicts the daily life of the artist Edda (performed by Sander herself) in the divided Berlin of the 1970s. The film follows the daily life of a photographer, artist, activist, single mother and member of a feminist collective,

moving between
various economic,
social and cultural
activities. During the
day, Edda works as an
artist and an activist,
and takes care of her
child and the
household; at night, she
photographs for a
commercial Berlin
newspaper and

develops photos. She is also a member of an artistic collective that is in the process of organizing an exhibition on the dominating capitalist image of West Berlin. As a feminist and an independent woman, Edda has consciously decided to organize her

life and work independently, in accordance with the feminist ideal of being in control of one's own life and the scheduling of one's own work. This does not mean, however, that her life is exempted from the processes of capitalist exploitation – quite the

opposite.

As early as the late 1970s, Helke Sander points out a very close connection between self-organization and the new forms of capitalist work. As Marion Osten states: “What does it mean for our work and life when the social, the cultural,

and the economic cease
be clearly
distinguishable
categories and instead
condition and permeate
each other?"¹⁸³ It
certainly means
nothing good for the
life of the protagonist
Edda; the economic
reality of self-
employment, seen as

emancipating to start with, seems to have a devastating effect upon her life. Edda is barely capable of fulfilling her numerous obligations; her daily life and relationships are disintegrating, she feels guilty and her working life is taking over every dimension of her being.

“The emancipatory struggle that had the good life as its objective now reappears in the unsatisfied longing for change and the struggle to survive.”¹⁸⁴

The film depicts the hectic daily life of a visibly exhausted and ceaselessly active

protagonist moving
from one work
assignment to the next,
from one political and
personal engagement to
another. The self-
organization of life and
the establishment of an
'independent' and
'autonomous' economy
reveal that these
emancipating ideals are

intertwined with new forms of exploitation and production, with a new understanding of engaged subjectivity. In the daily life of the artist and activist, the desire for political, feminist and cultural self-sufficiency becomes the exact opposite. The

‘autonomous’ and self-sufficient production does not transcend social contradictions, but embodies them to the fullest and aggravates them further, with the so-called freedom transforming into a daily dependence on numerous tasks and

projects.

The embodiment of social contradictions is also characteristic of many artistic subjectivities today, where (male and female) artists switch from one activity to another; in this, the flexibility and precariousness of

artistic activities goes hand in hand with the dynamic of contemporary institutions. The disappearance of the borders between art and life thus indicates the problematic social opposites in post-Fordism, where social and political work finds

itself at the core of capitalist value production.

This is also the way that, from today's perspective, Lesage's essay on Ina Wudtke could be read; since the early 1990s, Wudtke has been working as an artist, activist and feminist, which makes

her some kind of contemporary clone of the 'all around reduced personality' of Edda in the film by Helke Sander. The disappearance of the border between life and work in the late-capitalist work processes actually leads to the disappearance of

the possibilities for an
emancipating alliance
between work and life,
an alliance that can
take place through the
constant politicizing of
this difference that
reveals the paradoxes
of contemporary
autonomy, the illusory
possibility of choice
and self-organisation of

one's life. "The entrepreneur of one's own labor should also be the artist of his/her own life."¹⁸⁵

This issue is politicized in a similar way in *Expensive Darlings* (Drage drage, 2007), a performance by the choreographer Maja Delak. Through a

choreographic
exploration of the
intimate and social
position of the dancers,
the performance
highlights the problem
of self-organising one's
life from a feminist
perspective, especially
delving into the wishes,
performances and
arising artistic

subjectivities of the
protagonists. This
performance, created
by Delak along with
other contemporary
dances, needs to be
viewed as a disclosure
of the political and
economic problems
triggered by the
disappearing border
between life and work:

the 'creative freedom' of the protagonists' lives on the edge of economic marginality results in an even greater dependence. Artistic and professional emancipation therefore does not mean the emancipation from traditional stereotypes

and expectations; it does not enable a better economic status either, because the disappearance of this border is part of the contemporary exploitation of work.

If we aid ourselves with Benjamin, one of the ways of politicizing artistic work could well

be a radical demand for a differentiation between work and life, between production and reproduction – i.e. a thematisation of the visibility of work as something directly connected to the methods of production. This is why it is so important to rethink

the role of the artist's work and find the dividing lines between the appropriation of the value of the artist's life and life itself.

It is quite easy to succumb to the dangerous pessimism that there is nothing left that can be done, that art is fully

subjugated to the capitalist forms of production and that artistic subjectivity has been completely appropriated by the capitalist way of working. The danger of this kind of pessimism does not lie so much in apathy and complaining but in

hatred toward art as allegedly profoundly intertwined with capitalist interests, as without content and as elitist. This kind of hatred towards art fails to realise that its object is actually the speculative capital investment into artistic life and life in general,

whereas the material and embodied artistic life actually takes place far away from such speculations.

Artists indeed mirror the contemporary work processes in their way of working, but this does not mean that they will live and work better because of it.

The artist's work actually shows us that other, real side of precariousness, flexibility and the value production with life itself; life must escape the capitalist processes of exploitation. The artist's work reveals that the artist actually works at the very

margin of the contemporary economy: the artist's work is at the core of value production, but is profoundly separated or entirely excluded from it. The more the pleasure of capital is projected into the artist's way of life – in other words, the more

artistic life represents an obscene excess of economy – the more the artist is excluded from this economy (and thus from life).

As proof, let me just point out the numerous political changes in recent years that have directly affected the financing of the arts,

educational
programmes and
support programmes
for the arts/progressive
artistic institutions at
the very time when we
should all actually be
working as artists.¹⁸⁶
With this pleasure,
projected into the
artist's way of life (and
becoming part of the

capital speculations
embodied in new
creative residential
neighbourhoods and
relaxed ways of being
through creative brands
and heterogeneous
lifestyles), the artist is
losing the essence of
their work: autonomy.
In a way, the projection
of obscene pleasure

into the value of artistic life takes away the artist's public role – the antagonistic and uncapturable autonomous position connected to shaping the common by conceiving and creating new forms. As a consequence, political engagement on the part

of the artist is changed into a burlesque or a fashion trend. The projection of the speculative value of artistic life shows that the formation of life is at the core of contemporary value production, because our lives are becoming our principal tasks

(work). And if there is no additional value (profit) to our work any longer, we are no longer worthy of life (investment).¹⁸⁷

Visible processes of work in the arts therefore become interesting when they disclose the hegemony of the difference

between art and life
and open up ways for
representations and
imagery of
contemporary
exploitation. In this, it
is extremely important
to make visible the
exploitation within
one's own methods of
production – to work in
a way that makes the

production conditions
visible.

Something else
becomes revealed
through this
differentiation between
life and art: the fact
that the formation and
creation of life is not
singular, but
fundamentally belongs
to the common. This

‘common’ aspect of life was at the core of the avant-garde art reflections of the 1960s for example, when the disappearance of the difference between life and art was part of almost any artistic demand of a more radical nature. This is corroborated by some

changes in recent years,
especially the
neoliberal measures of
austerity and
accusations directed
towards art in terms of
it not being in the
public interest.
Cynically, according to
all the rules and
regulations, artistic
work should become a

role model of how to work, exploit the workforce and abstract the content regardless of how problematic it may be. Quite the opposite takes place: the artist is accused of laziness and uselessness, and lives at the margin of visibility.

In more authoritarian

European societies, artists also take over the role of social parasites and their activities are the first to be sanctioned. The accusing – i.e. a constant political need for the artist's work to change, which can be identified in numerous reforms of the

financing and support
for the arts – is a
consequence of the fact
that there are so many
speculative desires
projected into the
artist's work. In other
words, this work is at
the core of many
capitalist market
fantasies: artistic work
supposedly abounds in

pleasure, is committed,
creative, fused with life
itself, committed to
incessant consumption
etc. We need to know
that the way the artist
works is not only
conditioned by the
economy and the
market. We can also
talk of aesthetic work:
the reshaping and

changing of
perceptions, the
establishing of the
forms for the
articulation of the
common. The artist's
activity is broader than
the economic ideal of a
'good and successful
life' or the speculative
market ideals of the
endless growth of

value.

The aesthetic dimension of work, which is connected to the autonomy of artistic work and creating the border between life and art, connects art with the public in a special way: art has the power to conceive of the not yet

conceived, to unveil
conceptual
contradictions and
contradictions of being.
I hereby understand
autonomy as the
establishment of the
border between art and
life, which profoundly
determines art precisely
because this difference
no longer exists. This

can be connected with Rancière's thoughts on the aesthetic regime of art, characterised by artistic autonomy – a notion that is still key to today's understanding of art. Within this regime, art is defined as singular and free from any specific rule or

hierarchy. “Yet it does so by destroying the mimetic barrier that distinguished ways of doing and making affiliated with art from other ways of doing and making, a barrier that separated its rules from the order of social occupations.

The aesthetic regime

asserts the absolute singularity of art and, at the same time, destroys any pragmatic criterion for isolating this singularity”¹⁸⁸

When we talk about the autonomy of art, this simultaneously creates an identity of its form with the forms of life, which opens to us the

entry into the understanding of the relation of art to work: “Art can show signs of being an exclusive activity insofar as it is work.”¹⁸⁹ The autonomy of art is therefore an argument in favour of art for art’s sake as opposed to the central role of work in

contemporary life. This autonomy shows that aesthetic practices are not exceptional, as opposed to other practices; they are not something separate from work, but represent and reshape the division and distribution of these activities.¹⁹⁰ Art is and

remains the common good, but in a special sense: the common good that is autonomous at the same time. Art is an autonomous fight for the articulation and forms of the public, which is currently under heavy attack due to the use of human

possibilities for the production of value.

In artistic work, the visibility of work is therefore closely connected to the representation of artistic subjectivity as something that indeed constantly works, but becomes really key when this difference

between life and work is radically politicised through the visibility of work. The visibility of work therefore resists the hegemonistic representation of work as something that is taking over life in its entirety. The artist's work needs to be analysed and connected

to the post-Fordist way of working, as well as with the capitalist exploitation procedures in order to unveil the other, extremely important side of the artist's activity: life, which belongs to everyone, not only those who work.

5.3. The Artist's Time: Projective Temporality

In this chapter, I will discuss a form that has completely prevailed in the production of culture, as well as in the ways we economize and arrange our lives today. As discussed by

Boltanski and
Chiapello, the new
spirit of capitalism
turns work and
production into an
endless economic
expansion and
manipulation, making
the project the basic
model for productive
work as well as the
basic trait of life and

work in general.¹⁹¹ Artists, but also those working in creative professions, have a word in common that is amply used for describing what it is we do: we work on a project basis.

At first sight, ‘project’ seems an endlessly wide umbrella term. It

is used to denote many different activities, from grand artistic events to punctured local dreams, from research activities to fishy implementations in construction work. The word seems so neutral that it becomes endlessly usable, which is also why its use does

not erase the many differences that exist between individual projects. Nevertheless, the highly increased use of a notion in various social contexts and undertakings is already enough to give rise to a certain uneasiness. This uneasiness and the

lightness with which the word 'project' is applied to various activities, rightfully merit being dealt with in more detail. This chapter will focus especially on the place of the project in art; the analysis of the word will attempt to shed light upon several of its

characteristics that are closely connected to the changes in contemporary ways of artistic work.

Today, artists, creative workers and people who are creative in one way or another are constantly engaged in projects, often several at once, and

move between the implementation of one project and the completion of another. Work exists as an endless string of projects, from starting them to finishing them at some future point; we are deeply involved in completing old projects and starting

new ones. Apart from the projects set in motion, there are naturally thousands that have never been realized, those that have been conceived of for the future but never received the 'drive' for implementation, which would be the financial (or more accurately,

the economic)
settlement between the
idea of the present and
the calculation of the
future. It seems that art
and the creative
professions have never
before placed so much
emphasis upon future
projects (in terms of the
conception,
experimentation,

reflection and shaping
in their connection) as
well as upon
encouraging and
practising the ability to
conceive of *what is yet
to happen*.

Despite the focus of
creative people upon
conceiving the future,
we live in a time
radically marked by the

inability to imagine political and economic ways of life different from the known. Our times are marked by a difficulty to conceive ruptures and potential changes, which also reflects in art and in the feeling of powerlessness when we try to think about art in

relation to the political. Lauren Berlant writes that the present is marked by ‘cruel optimism’; we invest in those relationships and aims that actually deflate our optimism and desires; the hope for a better life depends on what prevents that hope from being

realized.¹⁹² We live in a time denoted by Stefano Harney and Valentina Desderi as one where we are frozen in the future; our attitude to the future has frozen the way in which we see work.

“Under capitalism the future is an open field ahead of

us that we can shape
and construct through
our work. Since we're
condemned to have a
future, we're
condemned to work,
and at the same time, if
you are condemned to
work, you are
condemned to have a
future. So if you want
to realize your dreams

you have to work
(always assuming that
those dreams are
something that belong
to a future scenario and
not the present one). If
you want to avoid
work, you have to work
as hard because you
have to find a way, you
have to have a plan, a
strategy. Whatever you

choose you will be working and you will be acting strategically, towards a goal and therefore you'll be productive. In order to change this dominant fate that wants to control the future, and therefore stay in the realm of the known, you have to sabotage

this double machine of work and future so that it stops functioning for a while and that a space is opened up (a present) and later, the future will come. One way to sabotage can be to refuse strategy.”¹⁹³

Let me link my argument to *Product of Other Circumstances*, a

2010 performance by Xavier Le Roy, which intervenes into this double machine of work and future very well. The title refers to an early performance by this French choreographer, *Product of Circumstances* (1999). *Product of Circumstances* presents

the autobiographic
story of Xavier Le Roy,
who became a
choreographer after
receiving a PhD in
biogenetics. The
performance opens up
the altered ways of
working in dance,
expands the field of
dance into other
spheres of human

activity and movement, and thoroughly re-evaluates the position of the choreographer's work. With *Product of Other Circumstances*, Xavier Le Roy once again finds himself in a performance that is a product of circumstances after two decades of successful

artistic creation; this time however, the performance is a response to the invitation of a fellow choreographer Boris Charmatz to create a butoh performance in two weeks.¹⁹⁴

In *Product of Other Circumstances*, we follow Le Roy's process

of working on the performance, especially how he becomes acquainted with butoh dance, the materials he studies and how he implements them within the timeframe he has available and has agreed to. The performance can almost be read as an exhibition

of the changed ways of working that have emerged in the choreographic work of today (searching for information online, the use of Wikipedia, gathering readily accessible materials). The exhibition of all this can also be understood as non-

material work on
contemporary
performance, which
profoundly changes the
temporal and physical
dimensions of work in
dance.

The interesting thing
about this performance
is not so much the
initial point made by Le
Roy that one can

become a butoh dancer in 14 days, but his accompanying statement that, due to lack of time, he created the performance in his free time – outside his professional project timetable, because it was something he has always wanted to do. But can the things

artists do outside their professional time be termed art at all? Is it physically possible to work outside one's professional time? Isn't art everything that the artist does, always and everywhere?

Today, it no longer holds that everything outside one's

professional time is
amateurism; actually,
the exact opposite
might be the case:
everything the artist
does is amateurism,
especially under the
dictatorship of the
accelerated time
conditions of
contemporary
production, constant

flexibility and
nomadism. If the artist
wishes to do what they
want under the
pressure of accelerated
time, then it is
paramount that they
like their work and
fully enjoy what they
do not yet know, but
what is destined to
come. The acceleration

– to learn butoh dance in two weeks – is supposed to be amateurish since butoh is a practice that requires long and painstaking work. At the same time, the acceleration of work and creation is one of the essential traits of project implementation

in the fields of art and culture.

Today, the artist has no hobbies because their time is entirely devoted to art. Everything the artist does is art, but at the same time, their activity is becoming increasingly amateurish because they actually

no longer have time – due to implementing projects in the future and taking care of upcoming ones; in other words, one needs to constantly maintain the connection between work and the future if one wishes to survive on the artistic market.

This intriguing

connection between
work and the future
underlies the excessive
use of the word
‘project’ in
contemporary artistic
and creative
professions; it is linked
with a specific time
dimension of work and
creation, which I will
term ‘projective

temporality’.

The artistic processes of creation and collaboration are caught in projective temporality, with the project becoming the ultimate horizon of creation. The project is a multitude of individual works, which arise as a

continuity of endless amendments because the horizon can never actually be reached or surpassed. One needs to start anew over and over, with every amendment followed by a radical break-up, i.e. the different character of another project, which is also

required by the artistic market. The only people who are able to avoid this constant differing at least to some extent are the young artists, the so-called young artistic force, not interesting so much for the amendments but for the unfinished – for what is

still taking shape before
our eyes. For this
reason, their work is
rooted in residence
networks, work in
progress, process
demonstration and
open structures. The
role of young artists is
supposed to reveal
potential values not yet
identified but

constantly sought after
by the market.
Absurdly, their actual
role is often that of a
cheap low-class labour
force that should be
held in a state of
'experimental
precariousness' for as
long as possible. This is
why we have been able
to meet so many

performance artists at festivals in recent years whose 'youth' somehow just has to go on and on.

The problem with this seeming openness is that, despite its different work dynamics (i.e. using more research-oriented, open processes), it is

fully subjected to the projective temporality of work. The rigid connection between work and the future does not give rise to changes in ways of being and creating, but is chiefly connected to administering the contexts of the future and recognising future

values on the artistic market. There is something destructive about projective temporality: it opens numerous possibilities, but it does not really open up the differences as well. The ultimate horizon of the work is always the completion of the project itself. The

future is projected as equivalent or somehow proportionate to the present; it is presented as a continuity of the present, the future which is already foreseen as such in the project itself. The future of the project is therefore retrospective; the completion is

already implemented within it.

The word ‘project’ must therefore be reflected on through the temporality that it implies – through the time dimension it projects. Projective temporality is the reason why artistic work and other creative

industries can be
analysed in close
connection with
capitalist production
processes and why we
can simultaneously
observe a
disappearance of a
constitutive place for
art in society; this
disappearance is closely
connected with

different forms of temporality and perception. Projective temporality is also the reason for the disappearance of differences between individual projects; in the contemporary world, they usually take place through the exploitation of a

flexible workforce, but
still want to have a
political and social
impact. Projective

temporality also
influences the
acceleration of
imaginative and
creative work, the
furthering of
transformation and
new, even more radical

affective individuation
of the subject.

An example of the
acceleration of
production subjects and
the omnipresent
increase in projective
work would be the
development of the
cultural-political model
of independent artists
or

administrators/manager
which can also be
viewed as a result of
the political struggle
for the support for non-
institutional culture.
Notably, it is not about
the need to distinguish
between artistic and
organisational work,
but especially about the
production of

subjectivity, which is at the core of this model. It is about the individualization of artistic ways and diversity, about the establishment of competitive monads that count projects in the scattered system of benefits and subsidies. The problem is that, in

this kind of work,
temporality is
completely at the
service of the
implementation of the
project; the relationship
between work and the
future is a static one,
preventing other forms
of collaboration,
connections,
persistence in time and

space, and research periods that extend beyond the set evaluation periods. The unforeseeable dynamic and energy flows of creativity are standardized, the tensions and intensities are reduced and subjected to the fulfilment of the

promised obligations;
the affective tensions
however, still focus
upon the satisfaction of
these obligations.

The abstraction or
seeming emptiness of
the word 'project' is
another reason why it
is necessary to rethink
this notion. The word
needs to be examined

due to its dangerous
independence and the
fact that it bundles
everything into the
unique temporal
dynamic of production:
into projective
temporality.

Projective
temporality has
numerous problematic
consequences for the

ways of life connected to implemented, proposed and amended projects. The project absorbs the experience of artistic work and creation, transforming this experience into a communal one as though the project was the only temporality of creation. In this, it also

affects subjectivity or, more accurately, the understanding of the subjectivity involved with the completion of the project.¹⁹⁵

Subjectivity becomes a result of amendments; contemporary subjectivities are a sum of various projects – private, public, social

and intimate. This temporality therefore affects the rhythm of the transformation of subjectivity.

Subjectivity needs to be flexible, but at the same time this changing workforce, this consumption of creative energies, needs to be constantly geared

towards finalisation (the completion of what is promised in the present), the realisation of the possibilities and their implementation.

A parallel comes to mind with a more topical and currently quite devastating social dimension – the role of debt in our economic,

political and social relations; at the end of the day, debts are a strategy for managing the temporality of subjects. How the artistic project functions as a debt and how the guilt of indebtedness can be changed into an affirmation of one's

own artistic subjectivity (albeit by taking a morally questionable opportunist stance), is demonstrated quite well in *60 Minutes of Opportunism* (2010), a performance by Ivana Müller.

The performance highlights the artist's promise to her

producer that she will perform alone and live, something she has actually never done before. The value of this performance is of course linked to the value that this kind of action by a well-known artist can have for the market; the expected values are also closely

connected to the choice of the artist, who must project what is still to come in proportion with the values of the future. Ivana Müller demonstrates the complexity of the choice that needs to be made by the artist, who is forever in a position of having to make

opportunistic choices in order to repay the debt of expectation.

Rather than referring directly to these problems, Müller explores this opportunist gesture in a series of performative elements that enable her to keep her promise (and repay her debt); at

the same time, she reaches far beyond the border of the promise itself. She makes the work visible, but not in terms of making that a theme or placing it on the stage; she gives sense to the aesthetic structure of the performance by making the working conditions

visible: what becomes visible is her initial promise that she will perform alone.

Uttered in a place in-between the interests of the market and the interests of friendship, which is frequent in artistic work, the promise (a response to a friendly invitation by

the producer) calls for Müller to create a series of dramaturgic solutions in order to keep the promise but turn it upside down at the same time. She therefore has to come up with a way that enables her to perform on stage while delegating her work

elsewhere. Although there is actually a lot going on, she herself just stands on the stage without moving. The activity comes from extras, recordings, images and the spectator's imagination. The pleasure of the spectator is generated by the ways in which

the working conditions
have been turned
upside down; in other
words, how intelligent
humour makes it
possible to cunningly
avoid the conditions
and promises given
when working and
actually not do what
we initially
promised.¹⁹⁶

There is something else paradoxical in nature and interesting for our analysis that takes place in this way of working; it is closely linked to temporal proposals and the projection of the future still to come. In the present, *we actually run out of time*, we do not

have any. It is no coincidence that our daily 'I do not have time' paradigm is so connected with the organisation of time, time management and work in the future. Projective temporality strengthens work in the future still to come while taking time away

from the present – time which Henri Bergson describes as duration. The more possibilities the project opens for the future, the more time gets sucked out of the present. The present just does not seem to last. The more it is possible to project, the less time we have

available for duration and persistence, for establishing, enabling and building social, political and communal relationships (which are not just spatial but mainly temporal relationships).

The intriguing relationship the project has with time has

several consequences for understanding our subjectivity. As the basic production model, the project is interesting because it provides an insight into the fact that, today, the way of working includes all the areas of our lives; the project no longer knows a border

between professional and personal investment – in other words, between life and work. The project not only entails work, but also self-realisation, on the level of one's life and sometimes deeply personal. The nature of this self-realisation is contradictory, however.

We work so much that we never again have time for ourselves and others; due to the amount of work and the intensity of our self-realisation, we can actually burn out in life.

Interestingly, this disappearing of the present in the project

and the general feeling of time loss are in contradiction to the way the project enters art in the twentieth century as a general term for artistic work. Simon Bayly's excellent essay *The End of the Project* follows the genealogy of the appearance of the word

‘project’ in art; one of the most interesting works presented is the study by Johnnie Gratton and Mark Sheringham on French contemporary art.¹⁹⁷ The two authors mention the work ‘project’ as a paradigm of visual culture from the beginnings of

modernism, with the word especially referring to methods of working in interdisciplinary artistic practices. The use of this word can be found in performative, situational, sustainable and processual works – those foregrounding the experimental and open

orientation of artistic work. The word 'project' should therefore primarily describe a processual, contingent and open practice, which cannot be planned or controlled and also entails the possibility of ending in a disaster, without a result or in

something completely
different and
unexpected.¹⁹⁸

The term ‘project’
began to be used in the
arts as a description of
highly heterogeneous
practices that entail
collaboration with
other authors, the
blurring of the
boundaries between art

and life, and a de-hierarchisation of ways of working. It has been part of artistic production from at least the 1960s onwards. Projects seemingly establish a new relationship with the present because their relationship with the present is

experimental and
considerably more
playful; despite all
these new forms of
project-based work,
projects do share a
certain new attitude
towards time.
According to Gratton
and Sheringham, the
attitude to time is
“rooted in the

etymological and
indelible make-up of
the term 'project' ...
temporal projection
into an as yet
unrealized and open
future is an
indispensable
characteristic of
anything regarded or
designated as a
'project'... An 'art' of

the project might suggest engagement in a process that not only takes time but offers creative ways of using, experiencing, structuring and reappropriating time, and of exploring the effects of time as change and *durée* [duration].”¹⁹⁹

The present is open in terms of its relationship with what is still to come, which makes the project a contradictory temporal constellation. The project opens up the present in terms of experimentation with the present in terms of change and duration;

simultaneously, this
openness into the
present is limited by
the future – by what is
not yet realised and
still lies ahead.
According to Bayly, the
project always contains
a proposition of the
future, which is
inseparable from the
present. In my opinion,

this is also where we need to search for the core of modernist approaches, despite their obsession with the present and the reduction of historical avant-gardistic utopias to the material procedures of the production of artistic work itself, this

modernist approach is still inspired by the historical avant-gardes and the central utopian project of the entire twentieth century: the need to change the present. In this sense, the genealogy presented by Gratton and Sheringham is somewhat off as the

project began to become art through historical avant-gardes, with the basic objective of changing the present in the name of the future. As we know, the aim of the twentieth century was to profoundly change the world; it was forever striving for a special

temporality – that of the horizon, which can never actually be reached.²⁰⁰

It is therefore essential to make a theoretical distinction between work and the project. This distinction should be understood as one of the contemporary forms of

the division of labour. Today, the project is the prevailing form we work in; however it expels any present-oriented form of work. Work and the project can be differentiated through an understanding of temporality: no matter how much they may

experiment with the present, all projects are projections and steps into the future, entailing a promise of the future and the possibility of what is still to come.²⁰¹ In contrast, we can understand work primarily as the preservation and

maintenance of the
present or a life
balance that is
preserved through a
continuous
consumption of human
powers. Such
understanding closely
connects work with the
practice of life and its
consumption. It
contains no other

promise but that of having to maintain and preserve life. Life namely tends towards entropy, contingency and decomposure; this makes work a self-preserving aimless activity; work is the temporal activity of duration. This duration is only possible because

work is the way of the
community; its
collective and
community-based
character has already
been discussed by
Marx.²⁰² Work is not
just an inevitable
human relationship
with nature or a
passively shared state;
it places us into a

relationship with other people: “to work is to work in relation to others.”²⁰³

Common work is also a paradoxical work without properties, which makes it similar to autonomous work, discussed by André Gorz. Gorz places work without properties in

opposition with
productive work;
common work is not
'collective work' or
operative work with a
common goal, but
something that places
us into a relationship
because it does not
have any aims or
properties – its essence
is that of preserving life

in an anarchic manner.²⁰⁴

In a short essay, Boyan Manchev elaborates on Gorz's understanding of life without properties, linking it with a special kind of temporality – that of the time of performance which is in contrast with

performance time. In doing so, Manchev wishes to demonstrate a bizarre shift in the understanding of contemporary work, which springs from “the perverse understanding of artistic work as a sort of a leisure experience, with no sign of

constraint, exploitation,
physical effort, sensible
experience of
matter.”²⁰⁵ The future-
related promises
constantly deceive us
that everything we do
in a project is a
leisurely experience in
which we experiment
with our lives and
sociality for a promise

in the future. The project therefore belongs to the exploitation of common work, to the commodification of the common, where sociability itself is in the core of exploitation.

For this reason, many experimental and performative artistic

practices of the 1960s and 1970s (e.g. Allan Kaprow, group OHO, the time paintings by Roman Opalka, neoavant-garde theatres) explored the current production procedures and opened up artistic work to work procedures. This was a kind of rebellion

against the future dimension; at the same time, these practices have an interesting relationship to the future – they entail a constant emancipatory moment that commits art to what is still to come and again opens art to the project. The reflection on artistic

work and the ways in which production procedures enter and become visible within artistic work can also clearly reveal the true nature of capitalised work, which becomes increasingly similar to artistic work today. We can even claim that, through its rebellion

against capitalisation
(of time, energies,
language, forms), art
radically attempts to
commit to the present
procedures of
production and
consumption while
creative, cognitive and
post-Fordist work takes
over the utopian,
future-oriented and

speculative nature of art. The

aforementioned type of work is committed to the creation of the future, to changes and to the revolutionisation of ways of working, and to the furthering of creativity. Such

capitalised projects are bound to actualise their

speculative excess,
including at the
expense of killing the
present. In this sense,
many artworks of the
1960s place the
visibility of work at the
forefront; in the
attempt to somehow
distance themselves
from the exploitation of
human abilities, they

focus upon production
(of the body, materials,
temporality, space).
This exploitation is also
deeply ingrained in the
production of art,
especially through the
investment of
phantasms into the
artist's life, as discussed
in the previous
chapter.²⁰⁶

Numerous artistic practices emerged as unpredictable sums of coincidences, maintained material identities, duration etc. can be read from the perspective of insistence on the preservation of the presence of work. We could even say that

contemporary
production can be
considerably better
analysed not so much
in terms of the division
between material and
non-material work
(lately, this division has
even been criticised by
its advocates)²⁰⁷, but in
terms of the
temporality of work

and the differences that this temporality establishes between work and the project.

With the aid of Henri Lefebvre, Simon Bayly deals with the difference between continuous everyday work and project work, the aim of which is always to change the

existing state of things:
“what might be a
project for, say, the
new museum’s
architect, is merely a
temporary work place
for the electrician
wiring the fire alarm
system.”²⁰⁸ According
to Bayly, this difference
helps us understand
that ‘life in a project’ is

actually a subjective and existential state, but that it is today becoming a problematic prevailing and universal tendency in the understanding of contemporary work and production. This 'life in a project' also helps us understand the speculative investment

of contemporary capital
into the life of the
artist, where the artist's
work is viewed as an
incessant changing of
the present, a
progressive
actualisation of life
potentialities and a
glance into the future
that takes place
through numerous self-

evaluations and proposals yet to come. This speculative life is far from the preservation and daily material process of life balance; it is also radically divorced from embodied differences and space singularities, which is why numerous projects often seem the

same.

The acceleration of projects and the activities of their new beginning and implementation thus make it possible for change to occur only at the moment of crisis, exhaustion or retreat. This kind of movement towards the completion

and consummation of the proposal is problematic because we do not actually talk about chronological temporality (where one thing follows another), about the narrative (utopian, dystopian etc.) or of progress, but rather of the balance between the future and

the present that
projects what is still to
come: the project is
therefore closer to
messianic temporality.
This kind of balance,
which actually 'freezes'
time into a multitude of
amendments, has
destructive
consequences for
subjectivity and the

communities within which artistic proposals are created. The artist is increasingly distant from work contexts, which do not seem to have any major differences between their particular articulations. Differences between creative communities

become invisible,
disabling their political
power, which is always
based on the singularity
of the artistic gesture.

The project therefore
becomes the ultimate
horizon of experience
and it is not unusual
that another frequently
used word in cultural
and creative production

also refers to the dynamic of this temporality: the word I have in mind, of course, is *deadline*. At the end of the project, there is this 'line of death'; it is a moment of pure fulfilment, the final consumption of creative life without an experience that would

follow it. To put it another way: the project is a promise in the future, but it can only be realised as a catastrophe; one namely needs to cross the line of death in order to be able to implement the project. This tension is somewhat alleviated by

the fact that life goes on regardless of that line because so many other projects remain to be finished; in this way, the horizon only moves away a little when we wish to touch it. In this way, the future is radically closed in its endless possibilities, and the

possibility of
experimenting with the
present is disabled.

In project
temporality, the
possibility of the future
is actually in balance
with the current power
relations. These current
power relations give us
the illusion that it is
possible to predict the

unpredictable; the future therefore seems increasingly calculated. In this sense, project temporality is not directly connected to the time structure of debt. The time structure of debt is also discussed by Lazzarato; he states that it is no coincidence that debt

has traditionally been considered as stealing time. The system of debt must neutralise time; it is necessary to prevent any kind of potentially deviant behaviour on the part of the debtor. The economy of debt is therefore the economy of time and

subjectivization in a very special way; the balance with the future can only be achieved in balance with what already exists.²⁰⁹

The temporality of the project is therefore contradictory. The project works as a fatal openness, full of libidinal possibilities of

what is still to come
but, at the same time,
including the line of
death. The project can
therefore be analysed
as *eros* and *thanatos*
together. It is this
catastrophic dimension,
the incessant
exhaustion of life forces
and the closeness of
death that also mark

today's affective feeling of work, which consequently arises from the exploiting of the human powers and potentials.²¹⁰ In project work, the future dimension of work is catastrophic; every attempt to change the present in relation to the future brings

calamity and disaster
and is inevitably
connected to failure.
The projective attitude
to the present is
marked by risk and
uncertainty; this
argument is quite in
line with Lefebvre's
thinking about work:
"No matter how close it
gets to success, every

endeavour is destined
to fail in the end...
Every totalisation
which aspires to
achieve totality
collapses, but only after
it has been explicit
about what it considers
its inherent virtualities
to be. When it makes
the illusory,
outrageous, and self-

totalizing claim that it is a world on the human (and thus finite) scale, the negative (limitation, finiteness) that this 'world' has always borne within itself begins eating it away, refuting it, dismantling it, and finally brings it tumbling down. Only

when a totality has been achieved does it become apparent that it is not a totality at all.”²¹¹

Today, we work incessantly in order to open up the future through work; we experiment with our own lives and the lives of others. The more we

work the stronger our feeling that we do not control work but that work controls us. Project work is therefore connected to a constant catastrophic feeling that, as a totality with which we are supposed to redo our lives (and our present), work is on the

verge of collapse. Interestingly, this prevailing way of working gives a feeling (even in the case of the smallest of projects) that it transforms the whole world or at least life in general; in this manner, it even more radically influences the acceleration of duration

and present time,
establishing a
specifically
'economizing' attitude
toward life – we work
responsibly for the
future while the present
slips continuously
through our fingers.

At the end of this
chapter, I would once
again like to point out

the opposition between how *the project actually enters into the work of art* and *the project as the prevailing mode of production of artistic work*. The project enters art as a naming for open, processual and interdisciplinary artistic practices that are supposed to focus

on the material
processes of the present
– on the inherent
temporality of the
duration of life that is
disappearing from
today's project work.
Project work is
therefore a means
through which art is
supposed to come close
to life and open itself to

the heterogeneous processes of life, which are in turn open towards the future that is yet to come. As Boris Groys points out in his essay *The Loneliness of the Project*, the project is always committed to parallel temporality of or the temporal exclusion from the

daily flow of life. The project is actually a temporary and sometimes also a permanent retreat from life (characteristic e.g. of religious communities as well as artistic projects). The project is therefore marked by desynchronised time;

when working on a project, we are actually separated from the time as experienced by society and the community. “But somewhere beyond this general flow of time, someone has begun working on a project—writing a book, preparing an

exhibition, or plotting a spectacular assassination—in the hopes that the completed project will alter the general run of things and all mankind will be bequeathed a different future: the very future, in fact, anticipated and aspired to in this project.”²¹²

Groys characterizes the creation of the project as “socially sanctioned loneliness”²¹³, desynchronised with the flow of time but required to offer something in return when it comes to an end. The loneliness discussed by Groys

brings up a paradoxical image of the modern solipsist artist, a loner, potentially an “idiot”²¹⁴, who temporarily leaves society due to the need for a change in the life he or she is a part of. The project is capable of taking itself out of the flow of life because

it is based on the hope that it will again be able to harmonise with social reality at a later point.

This temporal harmonisation is contradictory in character because it is possible only due to the change that the project is supposed to bring.

For this reason, this harmonisation is always a harmonisation of something different, of something that has already taken itself out of society (regardless of whether the project is successful or not). Many loners can be found in performance art pieces and

experimental events
involving the audience,
in which art came close
to life by actually
stepping out of it: it
creates special
conditions of
experience (hence the
emphasis on rules,
scores, scripts, etc.)
which could induce
change in the method

of perception and the creation of aesthetic forms.²¹⁵ Loners can also be found earlier, e.g. in the projects of the historical avant-garde – the first ‘projects in art’ proper, committed to a universal change of human life if not that of the universe.

Groys points out the problematic character of such historical avant-garde endeavours committed to utopian universal projects with the aim of shaping a new future for everyone, but by means of hermetic language and forms that could only be communicated

in self-isolation. This also makes the project a modern phenomenon whose implementation is based on exclusion and exclusivity, which gives a highly contradictory status to modernity and its yearning for progress. As Groys states, the problem is that the

resynchronisation with society – the aim of every successful or unsuccessful project – entails a feeling of sickness: what gets lost is the feeling of being suspended in parallel time, of belonging to excluded life “beyond the general run of things”.²¹⁶ Today, this

kind of socially sanctioned loneliness characterises work of any kind whatsoever. We frequently work as loners, preparing one project after another while being solipsistically isolated from the communal practice of daily life. The basic symptom of

this isolation is the
sense of a general lack
of time. This state
could also be described
as a contradiction of
modern existence.
Jason Read terms
modern existence
'social isolation',
springing from the
contemporary
simultaneous

exploitation of human
communicative and
social potentiality, the
contemporary
alienation of our
sociality, in which
social bonds become
subject to private
choice and market offer
while our common
essence is at the core of
exploitation.²¹⁷

Let me refer to another artistic work at this point. It can tell us a lot about the interesting symptoms of this difficult illness, the resynchronisation with life that is required in numerous contemporary artistic projects. At the beginning of his

documentary video
*Documentation of
Selected Works 1971 –
1975*, the artist Chris
Burden spends about
ten minutes talking
about the works that
we are about to see in
the film. A considerable
part of this
introduction (in which
Burden talks in close-

up, so that we are only able to see his face), focuses on how we are to watch the footage, during which we need be aware throughout that these were true events, but that what we are about to see is far from what actually happened: “I want you to ... try to remain

aware that you're not seeing the actual experience.”²¹⁸

If read in the light of our reflection on the project, Burden's address is not only interesting as a defence of the 'authentic feeling' of the live event, which cannot be captured on film, but

also as an argument for this special and temporally unique social situation of the artist and the participants in the event desynchronised with reality. It is a defence of this special illness of exclusion from the order of things, which is

discussed by Groys and necessarily remains after the end of the project, a defence of the idiotic loneliness that comes to a definite end when the event becomes part of social reality.

Burden's address is especially interesting because this is an early

documentation of
artistic works in the
field of performance
art, where the division
between work and
documentation is still
naively obvious as far
as their status and
understanding of
reality are concerned.
Burden strictly
differentiates between

the event and its documentation; the project is therefore still on the side of the event. As stated by Groys, documentation in contemporary art should be considered in close connection with the project (and, may I add, ultimately makes even the most idiotic

attempts not seem
idiotic). Today, the
document is the basic
witness to the artistic
project, to the
successful or
unsuccessful
synchronisation with
reality. The artistic
project cannot be
evaluated as a result –
in other words, we can

never say with certainty whether the aim has been met or not (i.e. whether the project has achieved what it was supposed to). “Our attention is thereby shifted away from the production of a work (including a work of art) onto life in the art project—a life

that is not primarily a productive process that is not tailored to developing a product, that is not “result-oriented.” Under these terms, art is no longer understood as the production of works of art but as documentation of life-in-the-project—

regardless of the
outcome. This clearly
has an effect on the
way art is now defined,
as art no longer
manifests as another,
new object for
contemplation
produced by the artist,
but as another,
heterogeneous
timeframe of the art

project, which is documented as such.”²¹⁹

In contemporary artistic institutions, we actually do not witness artistic works, but the production and documentation of life as a pure activity by means of art. According to Groys, art has

become bio-political in this sense; we are again confronted with the relationship between art and life, but in a totally different constellation. This relationship is “characterized by the paradox of art in the guise of the art project, now also wanting to

become life, instead of, say, simply reproducing life or furnishing it with art objects.”²²⁰

What we actually witness in numerous contemporary artistic institutions are documented processes, artistic procedures and documented states of exclusion from the

everyday order of things. In my opinion, this exclusion is also the reason for the popularity of performative events in visual art in recent years; this particularity gives rise to the feeling that there has actually been a change in the present, that something

has finally happened.
The feeling of
enlivenment in
contemporary artistic
institutions is
frequently a part of
isolated and socially
sanctioned loneliness
(in which we can
finally break its norms).

On the one hand,
project work, prevalent

in contemporary culture, actually exhausts the present because this kind of work entails life itself. On the other hand, work as a material process (practice itself) remains without value because such work cannot be isolated and included in the

conception of the future. It is always subject to the flow of unforeseeable time and common relationships as well as to the entropy of work's further attempts and repetitions.

Groys uses the project to talk about the change in the

understanding of art. However, we could also connect the project with wider changes in the field of the exploitation of human powers and creativity; human powers and creativity need to be constantly arranged and evaluated like many other projects.

An interesting part of this exploitation is the fact that the project actually delegates the singular gesture of the one who works, that it actually shifts the authorship and creative gesture of the artist elsewhere.

When making projects, we no longer

work as authors, but delegate our authorship to a multitude of evaluative, managerial and organisational processes that projective temporality needs to be constantly subordinated to. Furthermore, we can no longer talk about the function of the

author because the commonality of creativity and the discursive network of various proposals are at the centre of production. The project should be research-oriented, should contain an individual investment, and should subordinate life to itself

for the duration of its implementation. It ultimately turns out that its authorisation no longer depends on our or common creative gesture and investment.

The following questions, also faced by many project proposers, is therefore

extremely interesting:
who authorizes the
project, i.e. how do you
establish whether the
project has been
successful or not, and
how do you approve
the financing of a
project and according
to what criteria? The
exhaustion arising from
project work springs

from the fact that the legitimacy of the project is not in its actual implementation and the implementer, but belongs to a higher anonymous bureaucratic and managerial authority, the structural power. Those investing themselves entirely into

the project, actually delegate their life powers to another authority. Such is also the functioning of today's bio-political power, which can fully reject life regardless of its implementation.

Project work
accelerates time and
intensifies exhaustion

because nobody is the author of their project anymore despite their considerable investment into it. As Simon Bayly states, those working on a project are only project agents. In their project proposal and implementation, they need to constantly

reply to and correspond with the systems of power, evaluations and intermediation of the intermediators responsible for the evaluation and speculative comparison of value.²²¹ According to this scenario, whose agents we have become, it is also

constantly expected
that we especially
perform our own
selves, i.e. that we
ceaselessly perform
ourselves as working
subjects and creative
beings of the
contemporary world.

This brings us back
to art and Groys's thesis
on the documentation

of art that has become life. Maybe this is why art has the power to open up the aesthetic dimension of the process of life, work and activity as such. The power of art ultimately does not arise from the management systems, but from the temporal

contingency and
entropy of its material
practice. So if it wishes
to survive at work, art
needs to rebel against
the project and demand
the temporality of work
as duration.

Conclusion

On Laziness and less Work

The aim of this book is to draw on the relationship between art and work, as well as on reflections on the characteristics of artistic labour, in order

to show how art approaches capitalism and at the same time resists the capitalist appropriation of human power and creation. The contemporary relationship between art and work is closely connected to the relationship between work and life as well as

with the ways that life
(subjectivity, sociality,
temporality,
movement) has been
entering the core of
contemporary
production. My

argument is based on
the belief that art is a
way of life, but not in
the sense that the
border between life and

art is disappearing; in fact, this border establishes itself time and time again, creating forms and representations of life as well as shaping the language of art. Art is a form of life, its perceptive and aesthetic power, the life yet to come. These

ways radically change the conditions of common life, the intensity of co-being and the existing forms of subjectivisation. Art could therefore be connected to the disclosure and shaping of life conditions as well as with perceptive, affective and

presentational
proposals. Such
proposals can
profoundly shatter the
conditions of art itself,
as they are articulated
regardless of existing
power relations. Today,
the relationship
between art and life is
highly topical because
their merger underlies

the capitalisation of
human powers and
their exploitation for
the generation of profit.
In contemporary ways
of working, the
boundary between
production and
reproduction is
disappearing. In this,
art is of central
importance; it comes

across as the ideal and most speculative representation of this disappearance, which is why it is at the very centre of the capitalist interest in generating value. It is therefore essential to critically analyse the labour of the artist and connect it to the post-Fordist way

of working, as well as
with capitalist
exploitation
procedures.

This kind of
understanding of art is
especially important at
a time that often feels
one of crisis and
transformation – a time
of an excess prevalence
of capitalism on the

one hand and the radical powerlessness of political activity and the inability to think the future on the other. Interestingly, after two decades of 'political art' and constant transgression of the border between life and art, the art of today faces a deep crisis in

terms of value articulation and its social role; at the same time, it is under attack from rightist politics in connection with the neoliberal understanding of freedom.

Although we have been confronted with numerous engaged,

political and critical
artistic projects over
the last two decades,
their pseudo-activity
makes them ineffective
and they fail to
penetrate and affect the
social field. The
pseudo-engagement of
art has also contributed
to making art a target
of dangerous populist

reproaches that art is but 'leftist elitism'; in this, it is claimed that art is an activity that does not interest the public and has no social role or influence, whereby the artists enjoy subsidies from the state and their alleged 'laziness' is protected from the self-

regulating and dynamic nature of the market.

Although there are several ‘classic’ arguments in this tirade that come up fairly constantly as a part of a completely erroneous moral belief (that artists supposedly do not work), these need to be looked at more

closely. It is important to recognize that the arguments against the elitism of contemporary art belong to a fusion of populist and neoliberal rhetoric with the aim of profoundly revaluating the articulation of the common and the community in contemporary society.

In this populist and corporate language, the community and the common are left to the decisions of 'free' individuals in the market; these people will choose (buy) whatever they like or whatever suits them most, and thus shape their relationships and

connections with others in accordance with their own individual desires (interestingly, the belief in the *a priori* rationality of choice is never questioned in this instance).²²² Along these lines, art is a result of the choices made by individuals rather than for the

common good; and beyond even this, in the light of populist rhetoric, any support for and cultivation of the common good is viewed as political elitism, an engaged leftist circle.²²³ There are many layers to this problem. On the one hand, this populist

argument against art requires a revaluation of the notion of the public, and on the other it touches upon the core of the problematic politicisation of art over the last two decades. It is a fact that, although the art of this period has never

ceased to be interested in political activity, it has simultaneously become distanced from the political public sphere.

In the conclusion of the book, I would like to discuss three different lines of argument that should indicate the

possibilities of an affirmation of art and its public place today. I would like to show that these arguments need to be disobediently rethought so that the artist's work can withstand the exploitation of creative power and, at the same time, reveal itself as a

potentiality of the
common – so that the
work of the artist may
be open to the lives of
everyone, not only to
those who work.

I.

The first disobedience
concerns the
relationship between

art and the economy — the ‘economic’ argument for the usefulness of art that goes something like this: it is bad not to support art because art also produces economic value.²²⁴ This therefore concerns argumentation about the value of art, which

goes hand in hand with the value of artistic work (both in the sense of works created by artists and works performed by them). Many active participants in the arts nowadays, who fight political pressure and radical financial cuts to subsidies and support

for the arts on various
fronts, articulate
common interest as
economic value;
oftentimes, part of the
arguments in favour of
the arts is the fact that
they form an important
part of the
contemporary economy
and the creative
industries, generating

important economic value.

Although it is sometimes wise to use the language of one's opponent in political argumentation, this argument is actually false and does not affirm the value of artistic activity as such: the arts do not have an

economic value
because one cannot
speculate on the value
of what is to come. The
proposals for common
being, which are
articulated regardless
of the existing power
relations, can never be
evaluated. If art really
needs to be affirmed
through the language

of economics, it needs to be pointed out that art is not connected to the economy of the production of value but is much closer to aimless spending, to giving gifts without expecting a return. This is discussed by Robert Pfaller, who argues that the basic trait of the

economy of art is actually lavish consumption.²²⁵ Pfaller states that this understanding is closer to Bataille's notion of consumption and points out something important when we think about the relationship between art and economics. It is

not only that art spends
senselessly; an
enormous part of
consumption is
senseless in the
contemporary capitalist
economy as well, but
the difference is that
the senseless
consumption in the arts
is constantly visible:
the fact that we openly

embark on lavish senseless spending (and without any repayment at that) is the very power of art.

According to Bataille, every society will generate surplus; the surplus will be spent or wasted, but societies differ in *the way* this is done.²²⁶ “Therein lies

the greatest difference compared to the present day. Today, we spend without noticing. Our consumption exists, but not on a grand scale abounding with pleasure. This is why today's society destroys its surpluses through forms of unconscious pleasure

that are actually neurotic and devoid of pleasure.”²²⁷ The economy of invisible spending places its impediments everywhere; according to Pfaller, this is also the case in the arts: “In this field, there are the impediments and consumption

mechanisms of curating and intermediation, so that there are at least two curators and agents per artist nowadays. The rest of today's artists are hardly productive at all: within an artist's work, actual artistic work only has a decreasing 10 per cent share in

comparison to studying the market, self-marketing, public relations, branding, socializing etc.”²²⁸

Therefore, the production of life and sociality are at the core of the ways of working in the arts; these are the ways in which creative powers are

capitalized and also in which impediments are placed upon their consumption and spending. One could claim something similar for other creative fields like science and education, which are also under the considerable pressure of economization and

rationalization.²²⁹ It is no good to moralize over this kind of intermediation (in terms of art being destroyed by the various intermediators); it needs to be noted that constant spending and lavishing takes place in the intermediation and

the economization of
the arts – in the
production and market
models of the arts. At
the same time, this
intermediation
functions as an
impediment to
lavishness; it attempts
to make this spending
‘meaningful’, to control
the affective

atmospheres and forces of spending. This also has a lot to do with the instability of value, which must be rendered rational and transparent, at least in appearance. “Just as there are societies that know they make magic and those that are not aware of that, there are

societies that know
they spend and those
that are not aware of it.
It is the latter that have
created huge spending
mechanisms that
gobble up their sources.
Since they are not
aware of it, they also
miss out on the magical
glow, the glamour of
their spending, and

thus no longer know
the feeling of doing
things on a grand
scale.”²³⁰

The contradiction of
contemporary
consumption can also
be viewed along these
lines: with today's
irrational, neurotic
spending and a
lavishness that

radically alters and destroys nature, this consumption is utterly neurotic and destructive to life. In view of this, Pfaller claims, “Bataille’s objection to the advocates of efficiency would be entirely different. Bataille would not say: do give

us some money so that the human side will not be completely extinguished in the process. But he would also not say: look, we can also be efficient from time to time and demonstrate the still invisible practicability of our undertakings.”²³¹

When defending the
'economic effects' of
art, the answer to the
question of why art
needs to be defended in
the first place should be
based neither on the
metaphysical
'humanist' argument
nor on pragmatic
arguments in terms of
its efficiency and

economic profitability.
Lavish consumption
resists the
interpretation of art as
something that defends
the human essence in
this time of raging
capitalism, but also
refuses to agree with
the contemporary
economic
understanding of art as

a part of the creative industries. These two interpretations are most frequent when art finds itself in the grip of financial strictness and under critical attacks. Public discussions attempt to shed light on the hidden essence of art (art civilizes, does something good

etc.) or stress its usefulness (art gives rise to profit and value). According to Pfaller though, Bataille's response to the critical reproaches would be entirely different: "Let us talk openly. We have clearly not co-operated enough so far. This gives you a

reason to limit us by means of various consumption mechanisms. However, as a test, simply give us the funds you now use for spin doctors, evaluation gendarmes, reform preachers, education agencies etc. and you will see: we will certainly use these

sources down to the last cent, for cultural and cultural-theoretical expenses abounding in pleasure. Unlike now, we and you will be surrounded by the beautiful glamour of doing things on a grand scale.”²³²

This beautiful glamour is not only an

aesthetic category but
also the category of
common pleasure
arising from
consumption. The
affirming of art with
the language of
economics is therefore
yet another false
consequence of the
‘political’ pseudo-
activity of art; a time

might be coming when the most radical politicisation of art will be its detachment from any kind of economic value in order to reveal new affective and aesthetic articulations of the community. Art deals with social problems and it is constantly pseudo-

active because we live
in a time with a radical
inability to establish
and conceive of a
reality through which
people's communities
could be articulated.
We live in a time of the
disappearance and
rearticulating of the
public, the
disappearance of the

public sphere. If, therefore, we wish actually to speak of political art, we need to discuss its relationship with the common.

Along the same lines, we also need to rethink the social and political values of art, which are connected to the perception, recognition

and establishment of the various forms of visibility of what we have and will have in common. At the same time, art is also closely connected to the new politics of temporality, which no longer participate in the endless production of the new, and in

training for the creative contexts with which it will be possible to prevail in the contemporary market of provocative and political artistic projects. In this sense, art has a lot to do with 'doing things on a grand scale', as Pfaller argues; this refers to

the pleasure of life and
creation when spending
and creating, the
pleasure felt when
creating and gifting
senselessly, in the
endless lavishness and
creation of a life in
common.

II.

The second line of argument for disobedience concerns the artist's relation to work, especially the usefulness and productive nature of that work, which affects every dimension of an artist's life (and therefore also comes across as a fusion of life

and work). Not only is this a time when numerous kinds of work and activities (not only artistic) are becoming 'useless' and unnecessary, it is also a time when one's potential abilities must be constantly updated: one needs to constantly perform oneself in a

way that allows one to become something other than one already is.

Contemporary work is strongly marked by transformation and flexibility; this does not actually open up new possibilities though, but frequently results in even more rigid and

exploitative working
conditions, in which
every moment
(including those of
inactivity) is dedicated
to seizing work better.
Many artistic practices
and ways of working
should therefore be
viewed as a resistance
to this kind of
definition of all

activities through
human work; for this
reason, many
contemporary artistic
works are interested in
methods of creation
that have an interesting
and incestuous
relationship with
laziness and non-work:
mistakes, minimum
effort, coincidence,

duration, passivity, etc. This intertwining between work and non-work, or between activity and laziness, is also connected to what I discussed earlier: visible senseless spending. It reveals the materiality of work, which is closely connected to time and

space and is no longer considered project-type headway towards the goal, but can also embrace long periods of passivity, sleep, inactivity etc.

In a photography series with the telling title of *Artist at Work*, the Croatian conceptual artist Mladen Stilinović

is depicted in his sleep in his bed, covered with a blanket and in various sleeping positions. In 1992, the same author published the text *In Praise of Laziness*, inspired by *Laziness as the Truth of Mankind* (1921) by Kamizir Malevich, in which he claims that

laziness is the mother of life. In his writing, Malevich condemns socialism's obsession with work and is also critical towards capitalism, which enables laziness for a select few. *In Praise of Laziness* continues this comparison of the different concepts of

laziness in Eastern and Western Europe (the socialist and capitalist worlds).

At the beginning of the 1990s, Stilinović offers an interesting interpretation and one that, in my opinion, is highly topical for the present time. He points out an interesting

difference between
artists from the West
(Europe and the US)
and the East (the
former Eastern
European countries):
“As an artist, I learned
from both East
(socialism) and West
(capitalism). Of course,
now when the borders
and political systems

have changed, such an experience will be no longer possible. But what I have learned from that dialogue, stays with me. My observation and knowledge of Western art has lately led me to a conclusion that art cannot exist... any more in the West. This

is not to say that there isn't any. Why cannot art exist anymore in the West? The answer is simple. Artists in the West are not lazy. Artists from the East are lazy; whether they will stay lazy now when they are no longer Eastern artists, remains to be seen.”²³³

In this way, Stilinović's manifesto touches upon yet another kind of wasteful consumption – laziness, which often wastes the most precious commodity of life in the present day, i.e. time.

After two decades have passed since the creation of Stilinović's

text, we can say that artists from the 'East' are no longer lazy either but participate in the methods of western artistic production, with the last traces of laziness having been successfully expelled by the transition processes. I therefore read Stilinović's text as

an insightful and humorous analysis of a certain situation that reveals many aspects of the close connection between art and capitalism, which was especially visible to artists from the East at the beginning of the nineties, because the history of their

practices was characterized by a different attitude to work. In comparison with socialism, capitalism has always been characterized by the artistic system (a developed system of contemporary art institutions, the market mechanisms of the

presentation of
contemporary art etc.)
– a system that
developed
contemporary art and
was not known in
socialist countries. But
this is not about
contemporary art not
having existed in the
East; it did, however it
developed under

different circumstances.

There was an absence of what Stilinović ironically describes as the preoccupation of the artists from the West with irrelevant things “such as production, promotion, the gallery system, the museum system, the competition

system (who is first), their preoccupation with objects, all that drives them away from laziness, away from art. Just as money is paper, so a gallery is a room”²³⁴. The artists of the East were therefore “lazy and poor because the entire system of insignificant factors did

not exist. Therefore they had time enough to concentrate on art and laziness. Even when they did produce art, they knew it was in vain, it was nothing”.

The difference between the East and the West is thus reduced to a thought hypothesis that tries to

affirm the creation of art in the East with the absence of the capitalist system of the production and dissemination of art. The contradictory nature of the hypothesis is deliberate, as it is generally believed that the development of art

in the East was not similar to that in the West due to the absence of this system (contemporary art institutions and the artistic market). For this reason, 'Eastern' art is practically non-existent in the canonized collections of contemporary art; also,

the history of contemporary art of the East is still more or less invisible.²³⁵

At the same time though, it is true that the East formed other models for making and producing art as well as other methods of collaboration and connection between

artists that were not part of institutional forms similar to those in the West.²³⁶

Although the prevailing opinion at the beginning of the 1990s was that the art of the East remained somewhat invisible and marginalized because it had not developed its

institutions, this lack could also be reflected on from an affirmative standpoint: it could be rethought what this subversive affirmation of ‘the absence of production models’ actually brings. This is what Stilinović does in his manifesto; his artistic work points out

the problematic connection between art and work. Work is actually at the forefront in both communist and capitalist societies; work is believed to be the way one finds one's purpose and becomes a part of society. In a communist society the artist is still able to

question this centrality of work, disclose its hypocritical ideological matrix and point out the true layabouts at the centre of the ideology of work.

This is also what Stilinović does in a number of his works from the 1970s and 1980s that demonstrate

the paradoxes of celebrating work through rest, for example in his series of works dedicated to the 1st of May (Labour Day) or by depicting the artist as a layabout (the photographic series *Artist at Work*). Today this disclosure of the non-work at the

centre of work seems to
have become
impossible because
today's artists are
always primarily
focused on working;
even artists can only be
lazy in order to work
better. In this, the
central value of work,
the constant changes to
the different kinds of

professional expertise,
flexibility and the close
connection between
work and the manner
of production are rarely
questioned.

As I attempted to
show in the book, the
actual problem is that
communication,
creativity and
potentiality of

subjectivity are at the very core of artistic work. In terms of the manner of working, the contemporary worker is close to what the artist should be doing; the contemporary ways of working and artistic pursuits seem to have nearly fused. At the same time, there is a

modality to
contemporary work
that, despite all the
freedom this work
offers, does not allow
for futile activities; as
Stilinović writes, the
artist of today cannot
work with an
awareness that what
he/she does is actually
nothing. Or, if we come

back to Pfaller, an awareness that the activity of the artist is actually visible and lavish senseless consumption. Quite the opposite: a part of artistic work is the numerous conceptualizations and determinations created by the mediators, in the

sense that the artist's work is hardly nothing and empty spending.

Useless as it may be, every activity must have a purpose and strive for a value on the market; every futile activity needs to be shown to have value. Stilinović's text from the beginning of the

1990s points out several key changes in artistic work, or in the ways artists perform their work; at the forefront, there are the centrality of work, the artist as an entrepreneurial person, constant nomadism, the constant readiness to reflect upon one's

work, participation in the presentation and dissemination of one's own production, the networking aspect of work, and the internationalization of work. In this, the artist actually does not have the time or scope for other types of creativity, those also

connected to other temporal modalities of being. At the same time, Stilinović's manifesto can also be read as a process of affirming the methods of artistic creation that have emerged outside the capitalist art systems, or at least as a manifest way of

stepping on the brake,
as an attempt to elude
the temporal totality of
capitalism that
connects the
acceleration of
contemporary time
with the visibility of
work.

There is something
else that needs to be
added to Stilinović's

manifesto. It is the massive amount of work performed by the artist that makes him or her lose the political power to show or expose the true layabouts at the core of the capitalist ideology of work. The lazy artist of socialism was still able to hold up a

mirror of irony to the ideological hypocrisy of the celebration of work; with the absence of institutions that could provide work, the artist actually needed to remain without work if he or she wanted to remain an artist. Today, the artist cannot remain without work if

he or she wants to remain an artist; this is why the artist works constantly and, at the same time, must be incessantly critical of their work. Their every gesture, no matter how lazy it may be, must necessarily be turned into work – if not by the artist themselves,

then in connection with the institutions and other elements of the system that make the artist's work visible and evaluate it as work.

In this constant striving to expel any trace of laziness from his or her useless work, the artist overlooks the fact that this is how he

or she loses any critical power to hold up a mirror to the true layabouts at the core of the capitalist system. According to the philosopher Aaron Schuster, the problem is that laziness was finally subdued by neoliberalism, yet can actually be found at the

neoliberal core.
“Contrary to protestant
work ethics,
postmodern work
ethics are basically
some kind of tolerated
guided laziness. The
enigmatic and tragic
character of Bartleby
has changed into a
universal farce, into the
absurdity of

contemporary
corporate life”.²³⁷

According to Schuster, this is why some of the laziest masters of this planet are the credit rating agencies, companies that affect the fate of the entire planet by ‘opinions only’ and without any public accountability

whatsoever.

While laziness is the new postmodern ethic cultivated by those who speculate and evaluate the future, the artist works incessantly, producing critical models, reflecting, warning, problematizing, provoking and

participating publicly
in one way or another.
The most absurd thing
is that the artist is still
frequently considered a
parasite and a free-
thinking freeloader
who needs public
funding instead of
establishing themselves
on the 'free' market. In
my opinion, these

reproaches need to be connected to the spread of laziness at the core of capitalism, whose speculations and creative solutions can only spread by simultaneously erasing the antagonistic sphere of the public – everything that belongs to and is valued as the

common good. It is in this public sphere where the artist needs to be active.

Even though the closeness of art and capitalism calls many practices into question, art still plays a very important role in the constitution of the social. After all, this

always becomes
apparent at the
moment the public field
has been put under a
question mark: every
intervention into the
privatization of the
public and every
attempt to exploit the
public sphere always
highlight the issue of
art. The attempt to

leave art to private interests is therefore equivalent to striving for everyone to work for their own private interest and in this way, indeed, to become rich layabouts. As Schuster writes, the problem is that this easy life always slips away and the necessity

of working remains.

III.

As Hannah Arendt writes in her book *The Human Condition*, all activities in the public sphere have become labour. This has resulted in the fact that everything we do is

pushed to the lowest level of supplying life's necessities and sufficient living standards.²³⁸ 'Making a living' thus becomes the centre of contemporary life. The consequence of the liberation of work is not only the entry of workers into the public

sphere; without doubt, work also rules everything else. In this sense, the prevalence of work is by no means connected to freedom and emancipation but to the omnipresent yoke of necessity.

At the same time, the utopian liberation from work (also demanded

by Marx) is not a proper answer to the prevalence of work, because work is closely connected to the materiality of life and the painstaking preservation of nature. According to Arendt, this working life would never be human life proper if “man-made

world of things, the human artifice erected by *homo faber*, becomes a home for mortal men, whose stability will endure and outlast the ever-changing movement of their lives and actions, only inasmuch as it transcends both the sheer functionalism of

things produced for consumption and the sheer utility of objects produced for use.”²³⁹

According to Arendt, the only exception that society is still willing to grant is that of the artistic professions: “the artist, who, strictly speaking, is the only ‘worker’ left in a

labouring society”.²⁴⁰

I deal with the changes in artistic ways of working in order to show that, today, the ‘artistic profession’ is no longer so ‘exceptional’ because the place of art in society has undergone profound changes in the last few decades.

Subordinated to the necessity of work, artistic work no longer knows a division between life and work: every aspect of life is an aspect of labour. It is flexible and subordinated to the project-oriented logic of work. It is losing its autonomy and is

regulated by numerous mechanisms of evaluation.

Furthermore, the situation of artistic work is even more complex than that.

Although artistic work is no longer exceptional because it is subordinated to the necessity of work (i.e.,

it is more and more
about working and less
and less about
creating), it does
preserve its exceptional
place within the capital
and economic
speculations on artistic
life, which is ascribed
social and economic
value as a kind of life
that is actually free

from work; in bizarre
contemporary
phantasms on
creativity, it turns into
‘pure creation’. Artistic
work is therefore at the
core of the twisted
ideological relationship
between work and
freedom; cynically, the
work that comes across
as the freest is the work

that is completely fused with life. The work considered free is the kind whose level of dedication and intensity leaves no further room for life. According to Arendt, work as liberation from work can be described as a highly intense life process,²⁴¹ and

contemporary work actually seems precisely that: a highly intense life that often has a devastating effect on the subjects who invest into it. As Arendt argues, this kind of work could also result in the downfall of humanity's 'arts', "all human productivity

would be sucked into an enormously intensified life process and would follow automatically, without pain or effort, its ever-recurrent natural cycle, i.e., its actual productivity".²⁴²

Arendt primarily refers to the changes in work that were supposed to

come with
mechanization and
automatization, but her
thoughts from the
1950s also bear weight
from the contemporary
perspective. Arendt
develops this thought
on the basis of the
classic differentiation
between the spheres of
human activity from

Aristotle onwards. According to Virno, these spheres – work, creativity and political activity – are no longer fundamentally different. Virno states that the basic characteristic of contemporaneity and post-Fordist work is the disappearance of any

differentiation between these three different types of activity. He focuses especially on the vanishing difference between work and politics: many traits of political activity constitute part of the post-Fordist world of work. In his interpretation, the

public nature of work not only comprises the fact that everything has become work but also that work has taken over the traits of a public activity.

Contemporary and communicative work is a virtuoso kind of public work; it is performed for its own

sake and it also generates a surplus value.²⁴³ As mentioned several times in this book, the public and political nature of work profoundly mark the artistic work of today: artistic work should no longer be about creating, but about activity (or working

with political, engaged and communicative human powers); the production of subjectivity, sociality and flexibility should be at its core. These powers become the powers of life and nature that are quite intense and extremely 'fertile' nowadays,

accelerating the natural
rhythm of life.
According to Arendt,
this does not change
the basic character of
this rhythm according
to the world: “The
rhythm of machines
would magnify and
intensify the natural
rhythm of life
enormously, but it

would not change, only make more deadly, life's chief character with respect to the world, which is to wear down durability".²⁴⁴

The intense use of human powers destroys the tenacity, duration and persistence of the world, as well as the duration and

persistence of
subjectivity; for this
reason, this use not
only results in
exhaustion and burn-
out but also in the
problematical
subordination of our
lives and activities to
the ways of
contemporary
production. Art is

therefore ambivalently close to capitalism. On the one hand, it is no longer exceptional; instead, it represents a way of seizing work to the fullest. On the other hand, it still indicates the material and embodied processes of creation that elude the necessity of life. Art is

not useful and
purposeful. It can result
from a total
coincidence or failure.
The length of its
duration is
unforeseeable. Art lasts
and is the potentiality
of human powers that
have not yet been
realized. At the same
time, art also does not

belong to the intensification of the production of life. Quite the opposite, it is the anarchic force of waste, sleep and inactivity that opens up atmospheres and rhythms of life that are different from anything production-oriented. Because of its

paradoxical autonomy, however, art is also fused with the entropy of life.

What might lie at the core of artistic autonomy is an awareness of the unrealized potentiality of creative powers; it opens up human activity and being to

the kind of activity that is always less than it could be. The critical relationship between art and work could therefore be viewed through the prism of the possibility of working less; this does not concern lazy rebellion, the privilege of non-work or the

extension of free time,
but making it possible
for artistic work to go
on and on so that it can
be, to paraphrase
Agamben, work
without qualities. It is
this ability to do less,
to endlessly persist in
this 'less' and in what
could be, that opens up
the human being to the

temporal dimension
and makes it historical.

According to Heller
Roazen, the human
being owes its
consistency to the
possibility of being less
than it is, which also
gives human existence
a temporal dimension:
“To grasp a human
action as such, one

must look to the shadows of the more minor acts it inevitably projects around it: to those unaccomplished acts that are less than it and that could always have been performed in its stead, or, alternately, to those unaccomplished acts with respect to which it

itself is less than it could have been.”²⁴⁵ It is the potentiality of doing less that gives tenacity to human activity and gives art the permanent and autonomous power to rethink the borders between the various types of human experience: art actually

opens the gateway
leading to this useless
confirmation of life.

Doing less could also
be understood as a new
radical gesture that
opens up speculation
about the value of
artistic life and, rather
than working towards
the perfection of work,
starts working

autonomously for life itself. It is therefore an important aesthetic and ethical attitude for the artist as a worker. This *less*, however, is uncompromising and performed on a grand scale: what can make human activities common to us all is the fact that we have the

wonderful ability to do less and to do something other than what we could be doing.

Doing less also speaks of a specific attitude on the part of the artistic worker, who needs to withstand the creative speculations about his or her life in

order to open up the temporal materiality of his or her own work. In this way, the artist's work yields to life, not in the sense of breaking the boundaries between life and artistic activity but always in the sense of placing its activity as the autonomous difference of a lesser

act: it is enabling life through doing less. In this sense, doing less can be understood as an exceptionally important affective shift that can significantly influence the rhythmic and flexible atmospheres of contemporary artistic life and open up new

ways of solidarity. This would then be the third disobedient line of argument in the defence of art: do less, precisely when confronted with the demand to do more.

Footnotes

1 Carey Young, “I’m the Revolutionary (2001)”, *Incorporated*, London: Film and Video Umbrella, 2002, 173.

2 Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six*

Sideways Reflections,
London: Profile
Books, 2009, 183.

3 The post-political
state can be
connected to the
changes in post-
industrial society.
Many theorists state
that the politics of
today mainly
involves the

bureaucratic
organization of
everyday interests
(Rancière), politics
without
antagonisms
(Mouffe) or tightly
connected to the
changes in the
mediatisation of
politics as well as to
economic and social

changes
(Baudrillard). We
can also link the
post-political state
with the theories of
Negri and Hardt,
where the post-
political is
connected to the
role of non-material
work, the
dominance of the

empire and the changes in the perception of class ideologies.

4 Alain Badiou, “15 Theses on Art”, *Maska*, 3-4, 19, (2005).

5 Olivier Marchart, “In Service of the Party. A Short Genealogy of Art

and "Collective Activism", *Maska*, 6-7, 21, (2006), pp. 88-99.

5 Ibidem, 94.

7 Ibidem, 99.

3 Chantal Mouffe, *On The Political*, London: Routledge, 2006, 72.

9 Ibidem, pp. 72-76.

10 Bojana Cvejić,

Learning by Making,
[online], Available
from:

<http://summit.kein.c>

(Accessed 26
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[1] Chantal Mouffe, *On
The Political*,
London: Routledge,
2006.

[2] Jacques Rancière,
Disagreement. Politics

and Philosophy,
Minneapolis:
University of
Minnesota Press,
1998, 28.

[3] Jacques Rancière,
*Aesthetics and its
Discontents*,
Hoboken: John
Wiley & Sons, 2009,
24.

[4] Giorgio Agamben,

*The Coming
Community,*
Minneapolis,
London: University
of Minnesota Press,
1993.

[5] Jacques Rancière,
*Aesthetics and its
Discontents,*
Hoboken: John
Wiley & Sons, 2009,
pp. 60-65.

[6 Ibidem. 57.

[7 Jacques Rancière,
*Disagreement. Politics
and Philosophy*,
Minneapolis:
University of
Minnesota Press,
1998, 57.

[8 Bojana Cvejić,
Learning by Making,
[online], Available
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(Accessed 26
January 2015).

- [9] Maurizio Lazzarato,
' 'Conversation with
Maurizio Lazzarato:
Exhausting
Immaterial Labour
in Performance', *Le
Journal des
Laboratoires and
TKH*, 17, (October

2010), 14.

20 Bifo therefore states that we actually work with our souls today. Cf. Franco Berardi Bifo, *The Soul At Work. From Alienation to Autonomy*, New York: Semiotext(e), 2009, 21.

21 Cf. Antonin Artaud,

The Theater and Its Double, New York: Grove Press, 1994.

The notion of body without organs as an absence of the organisation of an organism is also one of the key notions in *Anti-Oedipus*:

Capitalism and Schizophrenia by

Deleuze and
Guattari.

- 22 Suely Rolnik, *Life on the Spot*, [online], Available from: <http://www.caosmos.org> (Accessed 26 January 2015). Rolnik exhaustively describes the issues of this kind of transformation,

basing her argument especially on the philosophy of subjectivity of Félix Guattari, who is also an important reference in Lazzarato's thought.

23 This is also discussed in the works of Robert Pfaller, *Das*

*schmutzige Heilige
und die reine
Vernunft. Symptome
der
Gegenwartskultur,
Frankfurt am Main:
Fischer Verlag,
2008. In his recent
book, he compares
such consumption
with Freud's
reflection on*

pleasure. Pleasure always exists, but not always in a form full of pleasure. It can also exist as unconscious pleasure, which produces its own symptoms. In this way, we can actually enjoy without noticing it.

Cf. *Wofür es sich zu leben lohnt. Elemente materialistischer Philosophie*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 2011, 202.

24 This is the way that Derrida describes Artaud's desire in his essay 'The Theater of Cruelty

and the Closure of Representation', in: *Theater Summer*, 9, 3, (1978), pp. 6-16.

25 Cf. Amelia Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

26 This is discussed by Erika Fischer Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, New York: Routledge, 2008.

27 Brian Massumi, “Navigating Movements”, *Hope*, M. Zaournazzi (Ed.),

New York:
Routledge, 2003,
224.

28 In the first seven years of their research work, *Via Negativa* focusses upon the thematisation of capital vices, or, in the researchers' words, seven

‘negative’ human
traits: ‘Our
outgoing point is
that wrath,
gluttony, greed,
lust, sloth, envy and
pride profoundly
mark the identity of
every individual.
Each of these
human
characteristics

opens up a conflict embedded in the subjectivity of every individual. On the one hand, it forms the mechanisms and strategies of defence against its negative drives. On the other hand, it develops various forms of lenience because it

does not withstand the pressure of its own subjectivity.” The second part of the research is called Via Nova; its last part deals with the theme of Shame. Cf. the studies in: *Ne, Via Negativa 2002–2008*, Marin Blažević (Ed.),

Ljubljana: Maska,
2010.

29 In the High Fidelity scene of the performance *Incasso* (2004), the actor Grega Zorc first admits that, after the tragic accident of his parents, he was extremely happy to get some

hifi music
equipment, which
he was able to
purchase from the
insurance money
received after their
deaths. After that,
he holds the heavy
speakers, which
were part of this
equipment, in his
extended arms until

he can bear it no more. He physically needs to defeat the gravity of his own merchandise and greed. In the performance *Viva Mandič*, the actor Marko Mandič lists all of his major acting achievements and then literally

squeezes out his
acting potential and
toasts himself with
his own sweat after
sweating for half an
hour in a
hermetically sealed
bag, where, in the
increasing heat and
lack of air, his body
produces so much
sweat that he can

drink it as a toast.

30 The public character of work is discussed in the last chapter, *The Visibility of Work*.

31 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, New York: Random House LLC, 2012, 59.

32 Peter Klepec,

Dobičkonosne strasti: Kapitalizem in perversija, Ljubljana: Analecta, 2008.

33 Richard Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2006, 123.

34 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and*

the Spirit of Capitalism, London: Routledge, 2001.

35 Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude, For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, New York: Semiotexte, 2004.

36 Agamben bases this argument on

Foucault, whose works thoroughly analyse the dispositif as a creation of obeying yet free bodies, as the manner in which subjects accept their identities in the very process of subordination. In

the English translation of his text dispositif is translated as apparatus.

37 Giorgio Agamben, *What is an apparatus? and Other Essays*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009, 14.

38 Ibidem, 20.

39 Ibidem, 21.

40 This is discussed by Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York – London: Routledge, 2006.

41 Agamben, p. 8.

42 Ibidem, p. 18.

43 Ibidem, p. 30.

14 Giorgio Agamben,
Profanations, New
York: Zone Books,
2010, 84.

15 Peter Klepec,
*Dobičkonosne strasti:
Kapitalizem in
perverzija*. Ljubljana:
Analecta, 2008.

16 Guillermo Gomez-
Peña, *In defence of
Performance Art*,

[online], Available from:

<http://www.pochanc>

(Accessed 26 January 2015).

17 Agamben considers museums to cover not only artistic institutions, but also protected natural areas, tourist sights, etc. Cf. *Profanations*,

New York: Zone Books, 2010.

48 Yvonne Rainer, *Letter to Marina Abramovic*, [online] Available from: <http://theperformancerainer-douglas-crimp-and-taisha-paggett-blast-marina-abramovic-and-moca-la/>

(Accessed 26
January 2015).

- 49 Sarah Wookey, *An Open Letter from a Dancer who refused to participate in Marina Abramović's MOCA performance*, [online], Available from:
[http://www.blouinart.info/press/open-letter-from-a-](http://www.blouinart.info/press/open-letter-from-a-dancer-who-refused-to-participate-in-marina-abramovic-s-moca-performance)

dancer-who-refused-
to-participate-in-
marina-
abramovic%E2%80%
moca-performance

(Accessed 26
January 2015).

50 The conversation
between Marina
Abramović and the
art historian
Sanford Kwinter is

available from:
<http://youtu.be/iIL7>
(Accessed 26
January 2015).

51 Yvonne Rainer,
*Letter to Marina
Ambramović*,
[online], Available
from:
[http://theperforman
rainer-
douglascrip-and-](http://theperformancerainer-douglascrip-and-)

taisha-paggett-blast-marina-abramovic-and-moca-la/

(Accessed 26 January 2015).

52 This is the direction in which the performative shift and the expansion of the performance art field into all social spheres

should be
rethought. This
expansion is also
discussed in by Jon
McKenzie, *Perform
or Else. From
Discipline to
Performance*,
London: Routledge,
2001.

53 Sarah Wookey, *An
Open Letter from a*

Dancer who refused to participate in Marina Abramović's MOCA performance, [online], Available from:

<http://www.blouinart.info/open-letter-from-a-dancer-who-refused-to-participate-in-marina-abramovic%E2%80%99s-moca-performance>

moca-performance

(Accessed 26
January 2015).

54 It is therefore not
unusual that
neoliberal
governments display
a strong desire to
rename art
'creativity'; in this
manner, human
powers are

exploited without a
voice (without
political
antagonisms).

55 The problematic
dimension of such
reconstructions,
especially feminist
performance art
pieces, is discussed
by Martha Rosler:
“If re-enactment

brings us
mystification rather
than mytho-poesis,
the performing of
the Eternal Return,
we have achieved
the opposite of
creative human
freedom. When we
see certain
previously
uncommodified

forms as switching from resistance to celebration, we can indeed fear that the second time is farce.” Rosler’s article points out the problematic status of the live archives and documentation of performance art

pieces at museums; live archives can also be connected with the changes in contemporary subjectivity. Martha Rosler, *The Second Time as Farce*, [online], Idiom Magazine, Available from:

<http://idiommag.com>

second-time-as-farce/ (Accessed 26 January 2015).

56 Cf. for example: Boris Groys, *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin. Die gespaltene Kultur in der Sowjet Union*, Munich: Hanser, 1988. Cf. also the lecture [online]: *Repetition*

*of Revolution,
Russian Avantgarde
Revisited, Available
from:*

<http://www.formerv>

(Accessed 26
January 2015).

57 Slavoj Žižek,
*Violence: Six
Sideways Reflections,*
London: Profile
Books, 2009, 19.

58 Ibidem, 20.

59 Ibidem, 20

60 Jacques Lacan,
*Television: A
Challenge to the
Psychoanalytic
Establishment*, Edited
by J. Copjec and
translated by J.
Mehlman, New
York: W. W. Norton,
1990, 128.

- 51 Ibidem, 117.
- 52 Žižek discusses this in his book *Violence*, London: Profile Books, 2009.
- 53 Jacques-Alain Miller, “On Shame”, *Jacques Lacan and the Other side of psychoanalysis*, Justin Clemens, Russell Grigg (Eds.),

Durham: Duke
University Press,
2006.

54 Eve Kosofsky
*Sedgwick, Touching
Feeling: Affect,
Pedagogy,
Performativity,*
Durham, New York:
Duke University
Press, 2003, 38.

55 Alenka Zupančič,

“Lacan in sram”,
Problemi, Revija za
kulturo in družbena
vprašanja, 44, 7/8,
(2006), 99.

56 The political
changes I have in
mind are those of
the political shift in
2010, especially
under the influence
of the positions of

Geert Wilders's
Party for Freedom,
which supported the
then minority
government and
introduced radical
rightist political
standpoints
regarding the
financing of the
culture, the attitude
towards minorities,

health policy etc.
One of the
consequences of this
shift was also the
cultural and
political programme
More than Quality,
drawn up by Halbe
Zijlstra, the then
Dutch delegate for
education, culture
and science. Despite

the strong
opposition of the
people in the arts
and the entire
artistic sector, this
programme of the
Dutch state made
substantial cuts in
the area of culture
and stopped the
operation of
numerous

important, even key
artistic and
educational
institutions, leaving
the development of
the arts entirely up
to the market in
many cases.

57 This was Kurt
Weill's term for his
opera *Mahagonny*,
where the word

‘Songspiel’ was used as a derivative from the German word ‘Singspiel’. The word denotes an operetta-like drama with musical dialogues.

58 The texts for the script are based on the actual notes of the then activists

and reveal the hope and conception of the future on the one hand and the difficulties of building the society of the future together on the other.

59 *Victory over the Sun* was a Futurist avant-garde opera

that saw its premiere in 1913.

70 Chantal Mouffe, *On The Political*, London: Routledge, 2006, 72.

71 The division of the sensual is discussed by Jacques Rancière in his book: *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*,

London, New York:
Continuum, 2010.

⁷² Nicolas Bourriaud,
Relational Aesthetics,
Dijon: Les presses
du réel, 2002.

⁷³ Ibidem, 14.

⁷⁴ Claire Bishop,
“Antagonism and
Relational
Aesthetics”, *October*,
110, Autumn 2004,

pp. 51–79. Look also: Claire Bishop: *Artificial Hells, Participatory Arts and Politics of Spectatorship*, Verso, 2012.

75 The problematic privileging of the active spectator in the philosophical reflection of theatre

spectatorship is also discussed by Jacques Rancière, “The Emancipated Spectator”, *Artforum*, (March 2007), pp. 272-280.

76 Claire Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics”, *October*, 110, Autumn 2004,

p. 15.

77 Ibidem, p. 15.

78 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002.

79 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1991.

80 Jacques Rancière, "The Emancipated

Spectator”,
Artforum, (March
2007), pp. 272-280.

31 Beti Žerovc, “O
umetniškem
dogodku na
umetniškem
dogodku”, Peter
Kisin and Beti
Žerovc (Eds.), 29.
grafični bienale
Ljubljana: Dogodek /

The 29th Biennial of Graphic Arts: The Event, Ljubljana: Mednarodni grafični likovni center / International Centre of Graphic Arts, 2011, p. 13.

32 Hito Steyerl, “Is a Museum a Factory?”, *e-flux Journal*, 7, June -

August 2009, pp. 5-10. Also available from:

<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/is-a-museum-a-factory>.

33 Ibidem. pp. 3-10.

34 Ibidem. pp. 3-10.

35 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002.

36 Irit Rogoff, *We - Collectivites, Mutualities, Participations*, [online], Available from:
<http://theater.kein.o>
(Accessed 26 January 2015).

37 Sonja Lavaert, Pascal Gielen, "The Dismeasure of Art.

An Interview with
Paolo Virno”, *Open
17: A Precarious
Existence*.

*Vulnerability in the
Public Domain*,
Amsterdam: SKOR
(Foundation Art and
Public Space), 17,
(2009).

38 Hito Steyerl: “Is a
Museum a

Factory?”, *e-flux Journal* 7, June–August 2009, pp. 5–10. Also available from:

<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/is-a-museum-a-factory>.

39 Sonja Lavaert, Pascal Gielen, “The Dismasure of Art. An Interview with

Paolo Virno", *Open
17: A Precarious
Existence.*

*Vulnerability in the
Public Domain,*
Amsterdam: SKOR
(Foundation Art and
Public Space), 17,
(2009). Also

available from:
[http://www.skor.nl/
4178-en.html](http://www.skor.nl/4178-en.html)

(Accessed 26
January 2015).

90 Ibidem.

91 Jacques Rancière,
“The Emancipated
Spectator”,
Artforum, (March
2007), pp. 272-280.

92 Ibidem, 279.

93 Peter Gena,
Jonathan Brent
(Eds.), *A John Cage*

*Reader: In
Celebration of His
Seventieth Birthday,
New York: C. F.
Peters, 1982, 22.*

94 Renata Salecl,
“Zadnje predavanje
(The Last Lecture)”,
Delo, March 3,
2008, 40.

95 Ibidem. Pausch
bravely fought his

illness, but
succumbed to it in
July 2008.

96 Fredric Jameson,
*Postmodernism, Or
the Cultural Logic of
Late Capitalism*,
Durham, New York:
Duke University
Press, 1999.

97 Andrew Carnegie,
Quoted from:

Florian Schneider,
Collaboration,
[online], Available
from:

<http://summit.kein.c>

(Accessed 26
January 2015).

98 Florian Schneider,
Collaboration,
[online], Available
from:

<http://summit.kein.c>

(Accessed 26
January 2015).

- 99 Matteo Pasquinelli,
*Immaterial Civil War,
Prototypes of Conflict
within Cognitive
Capitalism*, [online],
Available from:
<http://eipcp.net/polit>
(Accessed 26
January 2015).

- 100 Florian Schneider,

Collaboration,
[online], Available
from:

<http://summit.kein.c>

(Accessed 26
January 2015).

[01] Paolo Virno, *A
Grammar of the
Multitude: For an
Analysis of
Contemporary Forms
of Life*, New York:

Semiotext(e), 2004,
41.

[02] Ibidem., 41.

[03] Ibidem., 41.

[04] Hito Steyerl,
“Forget Otherness”,
Another Publication,
Renee Ridgway,
Katarina Zdjelar
(Eds.), Berlin:
Revolver, 2006, pp.
15-20.

[05 Eleanor Bauer,
“Becoming Room,
Becoming Mac, New
Artistic Identities in
the Transnational
Brussels Dance
Community”,
Maska, 22, 107-108,
(2007), 66.

[06 Myriam Van
Imschoot, Xavier Le
Roy, “Letters in

Collaboration”,
Maska, 1-2 (84-85),
2004, 54.

[07 André Lepecki,
“Dance without
distance”, *Ballet
International / Tanz
Aktuell*, February
2001, pp. 29-31.

[08 Myriam Van
Imschoot, Xavier Le
Roy, “Letters in

Collaboration”,
Maska, 1-2 (84-85),
2004, 54.

- [09] Charles Green, *The Third Hand, Collaboration in Art from Modernism to Postmodernism*,
Kensington:
University of New
South Wales Press,
2001.

[10] Florian Schneider,
Collaboration,
[online], Available
from:

<http://summit.kein.c>

(Accessed 26
January 2015).

[11] Cf.

<http://www.everybo>

[12] This is also
discussed by Jodi
Dean, who lucidly

analyses the capitalisation of the communication and collaboration in new media. Cf. Jodi Dean, *Blog Theory, Feedback and Capture in the Circuits of Drive*, London: Polity Press, 2010.

[13] Myriam Van

Imschoot, Xavier Le
Roy, “Letters in
Collaboration”,
Maska, 1-2 (84-85),
2004, 55.

[14] Alain Badiou, “15
Theses on Art”,
Maska, 3-4, 19,
(2005), 9.

[15] Slavoj Žižek,
Violence: Six
Sideways

Reflections, London:
Profile Books, 2009.

[16] Marx's letter to
Arnold Ruge, 1844.

[17] Leland de la
Durantaye,
"Agamben's
Potential",
Diacritics, 30, 2
(Summer 2000), pp.
3-24.

[18] Giorgio Agamben,

*The Coming
Community,*
Minneapolis:
University of
Minnesota Press,
1993.

[19] This is also how
this text on working
together was
created. In 2007, I
was supposed to
give a lecture

together with Ivana Müller on the prognosis of working together at a conference in Berlin, but our co-operation failed to materialise.

Although we wanted that very much, we ran out of time. When writing

the text, I realised that we failed because we wished to invent and make visible yet another protocol of cooperation and add yet more to its excess. We did not consider that we were already cooperating,

meeting, posing
each other
challenges through
numerous situations
and conditioning
our common future,
in which visibility
hardly plays a part
at all.

[20] Simon Ford, *The
Situationists
International*,

London: Black Dog
Publishing, 2005,
42.

- [21] Susan Buck-Morrs,
*Dreamworld and
Catastrophe. The
Passing of Mass
Utopia in East and
West*, Cambridge,
Massachusetts,
London: The MIT
Press, 2002.

[22] Allan Kaprow, “Notes on the creation of a Total Art”, *Critical Mass: Happenings, Fluxus, Performance, Intermedia and Rutgers University*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003, 6.

[23] Jean-Luc Nancy,

*The Inoperative
Community*, Peter
Connor (Ed.),
Minneapolis,
London: University
of Minnesota Press,
2004, XIII.

[24 Ibidem, XXXIX.

[25 The exhibition:
Collective Creativity,
curating: What,
How & for Whom /

WHW (Ana Devic,
Nataša Ilic, Sabina
Sabolovic, Ivet
Curlin), Kunsthalle
Fridericianum,
Kassel, May 1 – July
17, 2005. Chto
Delat? / What is to
be done?, a group of
artists and theorists
of the younger
generation,

consisting of artists
(Tsaplya and
Glucklya, Nikolai
Oleinikov, Kirill
Shuvalov and
Dmitry Vilensky),
philosophers (Artem
Magun, Oxana
Timofeeva, Alexei
Penzin) and writers
(David Riff,
Alexander Skidan)

active in St.
Petersburg,
Moscow, Nizhny
Novgorod and
Berlin. The group
was founded in
2003 with the
action *The
Refoundation of
Petersburg.*

<http://chtodelat.org>

[26 The text from *The*

Builders video is
available at:
<http://vimeo.com/68>

[27] Over the last few
years, there have
been many
exhibitions on the
theme of
community as well
as performances
dealing with the
subject of

collaboration. An example would be *Colect-if* (2003) by a group of seven artistic creators (Bojana Cvejić, Varinia Canto Villa, Alix Eynaudi, Ugo Dhaes, Katarina Stegnar, Rebecca Murgi and Janez Janša).

[28] Jean-Luc Nancy,
*The Inoperative
Community*, Peter
Connor (Ed.),
Minneapolis,
London: University
of Minnesota Press,
2004, XIII.

[29] Ibidem.

[30] Jean-Luc Nancy,
*The Inoperative
Community*, Peter

Connor (Ed.),
Minneapolis,
London: University
of Minnesota Press,
2004, XXXIX.

[31] Jean-Baptiste
Marongiu,
“Agamben, le
chercheur
d’homme”,
Libération, April 1,
1999. The interview

is also available at:
http://www.liberation-le-chercheur-d-homme_270036

(Accessed 26
January 2015)

- [32] Giorgio Agamben,
*The Coming
Community*,
Minneapolis,
London: University
of Minnesota Press,

1993.

[33] Leland de la Durantaye, “Agamben’s Potential”, *Diacritics*, 30, 2 (Summer 2000), pp. 3-24.

[34] BADco. is a collaborative performance collective based in

Zagreb, Croatia. The
artistic core of the
collective are
Pravdan
Devlahovic, Ivana
Ivković, Ana
Kreitmeyer,
Tomislav Medak,
Goran Sergej
Pristaš, Nikolina
Pristaš and Zrinka
Užbinec.

[35] Harun Farocki, Arbeiter Verlassen die Fabrik, video, 36 min, 1995.

[36] Harun Farocki, “Workers Leaving the Factory”, BADco. *1 poor and one 0*, Zagreb: theatre programme of the performance, 2008.

[37] Bojana Cvejić, *How open are you open? Pre-sentiments, pre-conceptions, projections*, [online], 2004, Available from:

<http://www.sarma.biz/id=1113> (Accessed 26 January 2015).

[38] Ibidem.

[39] Cf. also Randy

Martin, *Critical Moves. Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*, Durham, New York: Duke University Press, 1998. For a more historical approach to the connection between dance and work from the American

perspective, cf.
Mark Franko, *The
Work of Dance.
Labour, Movement
and Identity in the
1930s*, Middletown:
Wesleyan Press,
2002.

[40] John Martin, *The
Modern Dance*,
Hightstown: Dance
Horizons, 1990.

[41] A. K. Gastev, “The Song of the Workers’ Blow”, in: Aleksandr Bogdanov, “Proletarian Poetry”, *The Labour Monthly*, (June 1932), 357.

[42] Gerald Raunig, *A Thousand Machines*, New York:

Semiotext(e), 2010.

- [43] The aspects of the kinetic ideologies of modernity are analysed in André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance, Performance and the Politics of Movement*, New York: Routledge Champan and Hall, 2006.

[44] This has several consequences, which we will not deal with in great detail. Firstly, the pleasure of working bodies is reproduced in a new form of capitalist work – entertainment and spectacle, e.g. in the

dancing bodies of
the Tiller Girls or
the dance
compositions of
Busby Berkeley.
Secondly, dance
resurfaces in the
massive spectacles
of ‘natural bodies’,
in which movement
is interiorized as the
(only) nature of the

human body,
making the healthy
and powerful
moving person part
of the naturalised
masses of
totalitarian systems.

[45] Dr. Seuss: *Pontoffel Pock, Where Are You*, DVD, Universal Studios, 2003 (25 min).

[46] Natalie Bookchin, *Mass Ornament*, 2006. The video is available at: <http://vimeo.com/54> (Accessed 26 January 2015). Of course, Bookchin refers to the eminent essay *The Mass Ornament* by Siegfried Kracauer.

[47] Brian Massumi, *The Future Birth of the Affective Fact*, [online], Conference Proceedings: Genealogies of Biopolitics, Available from: <http://browse.reticu>. (Accessed 26 January 2015).

[48] This centrality of

movement in Post-Fordistic production has also been overlooked when the cognitive proletariat was understood by philosophers to be a new force in the political battle against the forces of capital, as a

possibility for a new
political movement.
The problem is that
such a cognitive
proletariat is
actually highly
disembodied,
already colonised
through the
temporality of
accelerated and
quantitative

movement, or as
Franco Berardi Bifo
writes: cognitarians
still have to search
for the body. Franco
Berardi Bifo,
*Cognitarian
Subjectivation*,
[online], e-flux
Journal (2010),
Available from:
<http://www.e->

flux.com/journal/cog

(Accessed 26

January 2015).

- [49] Paolo Virno, *The Dismasure of Art*, [online], Open, A Precarious Existence, 17 (2009), Available from:

<http://www.skor.nl/4178-en.html>

(Accessed 26
January 2015).

- [50] From the history of
the Skype chat of
Igor Štromajer and
Brane Zorman at the
time of transmission
of *Ballettikka*
Internettikka:
Stattikka. The
documentation of
the project is

available from:
<http://www.intima.c>
(Accessed 26
January 2015).

- [51] *Tele-Plateaus –
Performative
Installation* was a
special event
created by Johannes
Birringer, Klaus
Nicolai and Thomas
Dumke and was

presented as a part of the CYNET Festival in Hellerau Hall, Dresden (2007).

[52] Agamben describes observers of chronological time in: Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains, A Commentary on the*

Letter to the Romans,
Redwood: Stanford
University Press,
2005.

[53] I will deal with this
in more detail in the
last chapter.

[54] Cristina Demaria,
nvsbl, [online],
Available from:
[http://www.eszter-](http://www.eszter-salamon.com/WWW)
[salamon.com/WWW](http://www.eszter-salamon.com/WWW),

(Accessed 26
January 2015).

[55] Maurice Blanchot,
*The Infinite
Conversation*,
Minneapolis:
University of
Minnesota Press,
1992, 121.

[56] Cf. Hans-Ties
Lehmann,
Postdramatic

Theatre, London:
Routledge, 2006.

[57] Adrian Heathfield,
*Out of Now, The
Lifeworks of Tehching
Hsieh*, Cambridge,
Massachusetts: The
MIT Press, 2009.

[58] I will discuss this in
more detail in the
chapter The Artist's
Time: Projective

Temporality.

[59] Just as the body needs to forget about its home bed in order to be able to sleep in it peacefully.

[60] Maurice Blanchot,
The Infinite Conversation,
Minneapolis:
University of

Minnesota Press,
1992, 121.

[61] The awareness of the potential temporality of work is at the core of many time procedures in art. According to art historian Pamela M. Lee, they constitute a response to the

new feeling of the end of history and the endless acceleration of the future, which marks an important part of the art of the 1960s. As Lee states, it is the questions on time that are the heir to the artistic explorations of the

1960s. In that period, art not only faces changed historical concepts of time, but also changed time rhythms and modulations under the influence of technological development. Lee uses the concepts of

duration and
infinity to analyse
films by Andy
Warhol (*Kiss, Sleep,
Empire*) and the
meticulously timed
processes of
durational painting
by the artist On
Kawara. Pamela M.
Lee, *Chronophobia,
On Time in the Art of*

the 1960s,
Cambridge, London:
The MIT Press,
2006.

[62 Cf. Peter Sloterdijk,
“Eurotaoism, to a
critique of political
kinetics”, *Nietzsche
and the Rhetoric of
Nihilism: Essays on
Interpretation,
Language and*

Politics, Tom Darby,
Béla Egyed, Ben
Jones (Eds.),
Ottawa: Carleton
University Press,
1989, 99-116.

[63] Gilles Deleuze,
Bergsonism, New
York: Zone Books,
1991, 48.

[64] Ibidem, 48.

[65] Odo Marquard,

*Temporales
Doppelleben:
Philosophische
Bemerkungen zu
unserer Zeit,
Jahrbuch 1990 der
Deutschen
Akademie für
Sprache und
Dichtung,
Wiesbaden:
Luchterland, 1990.*

[66] Dieter Lesage,
“Portrait of the
Artist as a Worker”,
Maska, 5-6, 20,
(2006), pp. 91-92.
Cf. also a more
detailed publication:
Dieter Lesage,
*Portrait of the Artist
as a DJ, Notes on Ina
Wudtke*, Brussels:
VHD, 2008. Lesage

later continued this analysis in a series of other essays: “Portrait of an artist as a resident”, *Etcetera*, 24, 104, pp. 22-23, Brussels: Theaterpublicaties, (2006) and “Portrait of an artist as a researcher”, *A Visual Culture*

Quarterly, 179, 29,
pp. 1-152, Antwerp:
MuHKA, (2007).

[67] Paolo Virno, *A
Grammar of the
Multitude: For an
Analysis of
Contemporary Forms
of Life*, New York:
Semiotext(e), 2004.

[68] Nicolas Bourriaud,
Relational Aesthetics,

Dijon: Les presses
du réel, 2002.
Lesage is highly
critical of the
simplified formal
approach to the
practice of DJ-ing as
found in Bourriaud,
who fails to
consider its social
and political
moments. A

similarly rhetorical redirection of the notion can be found in another of Bourriaud's essays, created as a response to Rancière's criticism of his views. Bourriaud views the precariousness of artistic works as a new

formal openness of art, in which he entirely abstracts their economical and social dimensions. Cf.

Nicolas Bourriaud,
*Precarious
Constructions.*

*Answer on Jacques
Rancière on Art and
Politics, [online],*

Available from:
[http://classic.skor.nl/4416-nl.html?](http://classic.skor.nl/4416-nl.html?lang=en)

[lang=en](#) (Accessed
26 January 2015).

- [69] Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, New York: Semiotext(e), 2004,

63.

[70] Luc Boltanski, Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, London: Verso, 2007.

[71] As warned by Ivor Southwood, this requirement not only holds for those who have work, but also for those who

don't; the
unemployed must
constantly prove
their employability,
be in a state of
constant readiness,
educate themselves
and organize their
empty time as if
they actually had
full-time
employment. In

this, subjectivity is wholly fused with work; the absence of work is nothing but constantly claiming that we are working on getting work – the performance of the working visibility of the absence of work. Ivor

Southwood, *Non
Stop Inertia*, London:
Zero Books, 2011.

[72] This kind of
virtuosic
speculation
characterizes the
entire projective
creative work and
frames artistic work
into a very special
kind of temporality.

I discuss this in more detail in the subchapter “The Artist’s Time: Projective Temporality”.

[73] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, Durham, New York: Duke University Press, 2011.

[74] Ibidem.

[75] This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two: “The Production of Sociality”.

[76] Vassilis Tsianos, Dimitris Papadopoulos, *Precarity: A Savage Journey to the Heart of Embodied Capitalism*, [online],

Available from:
<http://eipcp.net/trar>
(Accessed 26
January 2015).

[77] This world is not only outside the ‘rich’ world; parallel to the visible work of Google’s creative labs, whose architectural concept and ‘free’

creative work
represent some sort
of ideal
disappearance of
the difference
between work time
and free time, there
exists the 'invisible'
Fordist work of the
data inputers and
cheap IT work force
working under strict

security conditions and entitled to a lot less benefits than Google's creative staff.

[78] Walter Benjamin, *The Author as Producer*, [online], New Left Review, 1/62, (1970), and Available from: <http://ebookbrowse.com>

benjamin-the-
author-as-producer-
pdf-d223630935

(Accessed 26
January 2015).

[79] Ibidem.

[80] Ibidem.

[81] What else should
this added value of
artistic life be but
the ideal image that
it is possible to live

in a free and relaxed manner while working a lot, so that the difference between work and life no longer matters? This added value also furthers the gentrification processes in contemporary cities. Artists, whose

lifestyle represents an ideal to those who ‘work’, in terms that it is possible to lead a working life and work as an artist, often inhabit the poorest urban areas, which later become resident centres for the upper middle class.

[82] Marion Von Osten,
“Irene ist Viele! Or
What We Call
‘Productive Forces’”,
e-flux Journal,
(September 2009),
8.

[83] Ibidem, 9.

[84] Ibidem, 7.

[85] Marion Von Osten,
“Irene ist Viele! Or
What We Call

‘Productive Forces’”,
e-flux Journal,
(September 2009),
8.

[86] The more central
creativity is in
production, the
more it is reduced,
disciplined and
regulated. Today,
this is especially
evident in the

numerous higher
education reforms: a
so-called
knowledge-based
society develops
countless
mechanisms by
means of which
creativity is
regulated and made
to fit transparent
‘moulds’, whose

effectiveness must be open to verification at any given moment.

[87] This kind of ‘unworthiness of life’ often underlies the argumentation of political reforms, especially in a time of economic crisis: suddenly, a number

of professions and types of work are no longer profitable; for this reason, they are no longer worthy of 'life'. They are subjugated to austerity principles as if life can be tightened like a belt and frozen for a while.

[88] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics, The Distribution of the Sensible*, London, New York: Continuum, 2004, 23.

[89] Ibidem, 45.

[90] Ibidem, 45.

[91] Luc Boltanski, Eve Chiapello, *The New*

Spirit of Capitalism,
London: Verso,
2007.

[92] Lauren Berlant,
Cruel Optimism,
Durham, New York:
Duke University
Press, 2011.

[93] Stefano Harney,
Valentina Desideri,
*Fate Work: A
Conversation*,

[online], Ephemera,
Theory & Politics of
Organization,
Available from:
[http://www.epheme
work-conversation](http://www.ephemework-conversation)
(Accessed 26
January 2015).

[94] As Le Roy explains
in his performance,
it was actually
about Charmatz's

reaction to Le Roy's
promise; the
invitation was
therefore meant as a
challenge to Le Roy.

[95] The stringing of
projects is
connected with the
acceleration of time,
well-illustrated by
the German
sociologist Harmut

Rosa using two metaphors. If the cultural image of the liberating and accelerated speed of the 20th century was that of a motorcycle then, in Rosa's opinion, the freedom of the motorcyclist has now been replaced

by a hamster
endlessly turning its
treadmill wheel in a
static place. And we
know what happens
to the motorcycle
wheel if it keeps
spinning and the
machine is held in
place. Cf. *Full Speed
Burnout? From the
Pleasures of the*

*Motorcycle to the
Bleakness of the
Treadmill: The Dual
Face of Social
Acceleration,*
[online],
International
Journal of
Motorcycle Studies,
6, 1, (Summer
2010), Available
from:

<http://ijms.nova.edu>

(Accessed 26
January 2015).

[96] The spectator's pleasure in turning one's own working conditions upside down can be compared to the strategies and tactics of laziness, which does not

stand for non-work,
but notably for a
different form of
consumption. This is
humorously and
cynically discussed
by the French
psychoanalyst
Corinne Maier in
Bonjour Laziness
(*Bonjour Paresse*,
2004), which

describes various ways of not doing any work within corporate culture. Cf. Corinne Maier, *Bonjour Paresse*, Paris: Michalon, 2004. The theme of this book compels me to quote one of the rules stated: “Be kind to people on

temporary contracts. They are the only ones who actually work.”

- [97] Simon Bayly, “The End of the Project: Futurity in the Culture of Catastrophe”, *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 2, 18,

(2013).

[98] This unfinished nature is present in the project in a very interesting way. Bayly gives the example of a contemporary scientist working in the field of nanotechnology, robotics or artificial

intelligence. The essential part of his work is that the project should not end in accordance with the predictions in the project proposal: the success of the project is measured in terms of whether the results actually

exceed the
expectations;
artificial
intelligence must
therefore do
precisely what we
do not expect it to.

[99] Johnnie Gratton,
Michael Sheringam
(Eds.), *The Art of the
Project*, Oxford: Berg
Hahn Books, 2005.

200 This is why the politics of time can be one of essential resistance dimensions of art; its resistance to the growing number of projects shows a completely different understanding of production and consumption. One

of these works is definitely *Noordung* by the director Dragan Živadinov, characterized by a different project logic with a sustainable attitude towards time. *Noordung* does not take place as the transformation of

one work into another, but as a holistic concept of the future, which cannot be implemented in any other way than by means of a radical revaluation of the duration of artistic work. Paradoxically, this duration

restores artistic
work to the present,
leaving material
traces on the work
itself. There is
another thing in this
project that
separates it from
projective
temporality: this
project is not
marked by

catastrophe but predominantly by a utopian affirmation of the future, in which the deadline is not only a work amendment, but a vision of life.

201 The word 'project' comes from the Latin word 'proiectum', which

means ‘before an action’.

202 This is discussed by Marx in *Capital* in connection with the ‘species-essence’ (Gattungswesen) of the human being; work is connected with the collective condition of existence.

203 Jason Read, “The Production of Subjectivity: From Transindividuality to the Commons”, *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics* 70, (2010).

204 André Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, London: Verso,

1990.

205 Boyan Manchev,
“Performance time
or time of
performance? The
struggle for
duration as struggle
for the event”,
*Maska: Projective
Temporality*, 149-
150, XXVII (2012),
pp. 118-121.

206 The rebellion of the art of the 1960s against the capitalisation of human abilities is also discussed by Pamela M. Lee in her research on the temporality of 1960s art. The author focusses on the obsession with

time in the art of the 1960s in order to shed light on various temporal politics of art and stresses the need to a different understanding of the present. Cf. Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia, On Time in the Art of the*

1960s, Cambridge,
London: MIT Press,
2006.

207 The problems of
this difference are
also discussed by
Maurizio Lazzarato
himself, who
actually launched
the notion of
immaterial work in
the 1990s. Cf.

Maurizio Lazzarato,
“Conversation with
Maurizio Lazzarato,
Exhausting
Immaterial Labour
in Performance”, *Le
Journal des
Laboratoires and
TKH*, 17, (October
2010).

208 Simon Bayly, “The
End of the Project:

Futurity in the
Culture of
Catastrophe”,
*Angelaki: Journal of
the Theoretical
Humanities*, 18, 2,
(2013).

209 Maurizio Lazzarato,
*The Making of the
Indebted Man*, New
York: Semiotext(e),
2012.

210 This new feeling also gives rise to new symptoms: burn-out, chronic fatigue syndrome and depression. For this reason, e.g. Mark Fischer places mental problems and illnesses connected with the feeling of the

appropriation of any kind of authenticity, the inability to do something new and constant flexibility, at the very centre of the new style of late capitalism, which he terms capitalist realism. According to Fischer, capitalist realism demands

that we yield to reality, which is plastic and capable of reconfiguration at any given moment. Cf. Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, London: Zero Books, Verso, 2009.

211 Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life, Foundations for*

*the Sociology of
Everyday*, New York
– London: Verso,
2002, 183.

212 Boris Groys, ‘ ‘The
Loneliness of the
Project’, *Going
Public*, Berlin:
Sternberg Press,
2010, 75.

213 Ibidem, 72.

214 The solipsism in

choreographic
practices and the
role of the idiot is
discussed by André
Lepecki in his
analysis by
ASGAMA, a
performance by
Juan Domingez and
early performances
by Bruce Nauman.
Cf. André Lepecki,

*Exhausting Dance,
Performance and the
Politics of Movement,*
New York:
Routledge,
Champan and Hall,
2006.

215 For this reason, a
lot of 1960s and
1970s performance
art pieces were like
tests – of endurance,

recognition, code cracking etc. Early happenings were based on meticulous scripts of actions. It was these meticulous protocols that opened art to the project.

216 Boris Groys, ‘The Loneliness of the

Project”, *Going
Public*, Berlin:
Sternberg Press,
2010, 75.

217 Jason Read: ‘The
Production of
Subjectivity: From
Transindividuality
to the Commons”,
*New Formations: A
Journal of
Culture/Theory/Politi*

70, (July 7, 2010),
125. We could say
that we actually
spend our social
powers as loners.
This is also why it is
possible to work
with contemporary
means of
communication in
utter loneliness;
today, this kind of

isolation is actually the most sociable.

218 Chris Burden, *Documentation of Selected Works 1971–1975*, film, 35 min. Available from: <http://www.ubu.com> (Accessed 26 January 2015).

219 Boris Groys, ‘The Loneliness of the

Project”, *Going Public*, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010, 78.

220 Ibidem, 79. Let me add that, paradoxically, this documentation also points to the fascination and phantasms of contemporary bio-

power. In his latest novel, *The Map and the Territory* (2010), Michel Houellebecq describes Jed Martin, an artist whose artistic projects offer different perspectives on work. In his young years, Martin

focusses on industrial work and, as an established artist, he primarily studies the division of labour in contemporary capitalism. In the novel, Jed approaches Houellebecq himself so that the latter

can write a review
on yet another in
Jed's series of
extremely
economically
successful works.
Houellebecq
describes Martin as
an ethnographer
rather than a
political
commentator. This

ethnographical role of the artist (also dealt with by Hal Foster in his famous essay *The Artist as an Ethnographer*) points out the biopolitical status of contemporary art and its documentation of life. The fact that

art wants to be life
gives art a
speculative value.

221 Simon Bayly, ‘ ’The
End of the Project:
Futurity in the
Culture of
Catastrophe”,
*Angelaki: Journal of
the Theoretical
Humanities*, 18, 2,
(2013).

222 This is discussed in:
Renata Salecl, *The Tyranny of Choice*,
London: Profile
Books, 2011.

223 The problem is all
the more acute
because in many
countries, the
common only exists
at the symbolic,
national level, and

whenever the arts are under fire, the argument in their defence is the problematic and homely notion of 'culture'. It is argued that the arts are the good, humane, civilized kernel under the surface of brutal

capitalist
inhumanity, which
only gives rise to a
moral discussion, in
terms of the good
and the bad, with
the argument taking
the wrong direction.

224 There needs to be a
differentiation
between
economically

successful artists
who can generate
an enormous
fictitious value (like
by example Damien
Hirst) and the
remaining artistic
production, which
operates under
completely different
economic
conditions. The

dependence of the arts on financial speculation is not really part of my discussion since I am more interested in the wider and financially less successful artistic production (still subject to market principles), which is

far from the speculative excesses of the art market. Nevertheless, such speculations do testify to a basic irrationality of value and confirm that art has very little to do with economic value; its value chiefly results

from irrational expectations. This is also the reason for the great number of intermediators, whose task is to constantly establish, check and contextualize the value of art.

225 Robert Pfaller,
Wofür es sich zu

*leben lohnt, Elemente
materialistischer
Philosophie,*
Frankfurt am Main:
Fischer Verlag,
2011.

226 Ibidem, 202.

227 Ibidem, 203.

228 Ibidem, 204.

229 The notion of
rationalization can
be placed parallel to

the notion of
transparency; they
both reflect the
desire of the
contemporary
capitalist economy
to prove itself to be
as rational as
possible, with any
use and
consumption being
goal-oriented. This

obsessive need for rationalization springs from the irrational nature of this economy – that of increasing and constant production, where excessive profit arises from the consumption of the surplus. There is no pleasure left in

this kind of
consumption.
Furthermore,
rationality in the
contemporary
economy goes hand
in hand with a bad
conscience; we
always buy too
much of what is
supposedly good for
us and nature.

230 Pfaller, 205.

231 Ibidem, 205.

232 Ibidem, 205.

233 Mladen Stilinović,
*Artist at work: 1973–
1983 = Umetnik na
delu: 1973–1983*,
Ljubljana: ŠKUC
Gallery, 2005.

234 Ibidem.

235 Of course, this not
only holds for visual

art but also for contemporary dance and experimental theatre forms.

236 Cf. e.g. *East Art Map, Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe*, Irwin (Ed.), London: Afterall, 2006.

237 Aaron Schuster, *Zelo teško je početi*

nič, [online],
Dnevnikov Objektiv,
Maša Ogrizek, (1
October 2011),
Available from:
<http://www.dnevnik>
(Accessed 26
January 2015).

238 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*,
Chicago, London:
The University of

Chicago Press,
1998, 128.

239 Ibidem, 173.

240 Ibidem, 127.

241 This is also how
projective
temporality
operates: the life
processes are made
more intense by
means of projects.

242 Arendt, 129.

243 Virno's statement on surplus value is key to understanding the changes in post-Fordist work and also poses the difference to Marx's understanding of virtuoso work. In post-Fordism, the work considered by

Marx as personal
services becomes
work into which
capital is invested:
industry changes
into a
communication
industry and the
shaping of factories
of ideas. I can also
connect the surplus
value of virtuoso

work with my own statement on the speculative value of artistic life: what is invested in is not art but artistic and creative powers: the artist's life is at the core of the interest on the capital.

244 Arendt, 134.

245 Daniel Heller

Roazen, *Echolalias, On the Forgetting of Language*, New York: Zone Books, 2005. Heller Roazen develops this thought on the basis of reading the ninth-century scholar al-Jāḥiẓ. In his monumental work *Book of*

Animals, al-Jāḥiẓ
reflects on the
difference between
animal and man.

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Maurizio Lazzarato,
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